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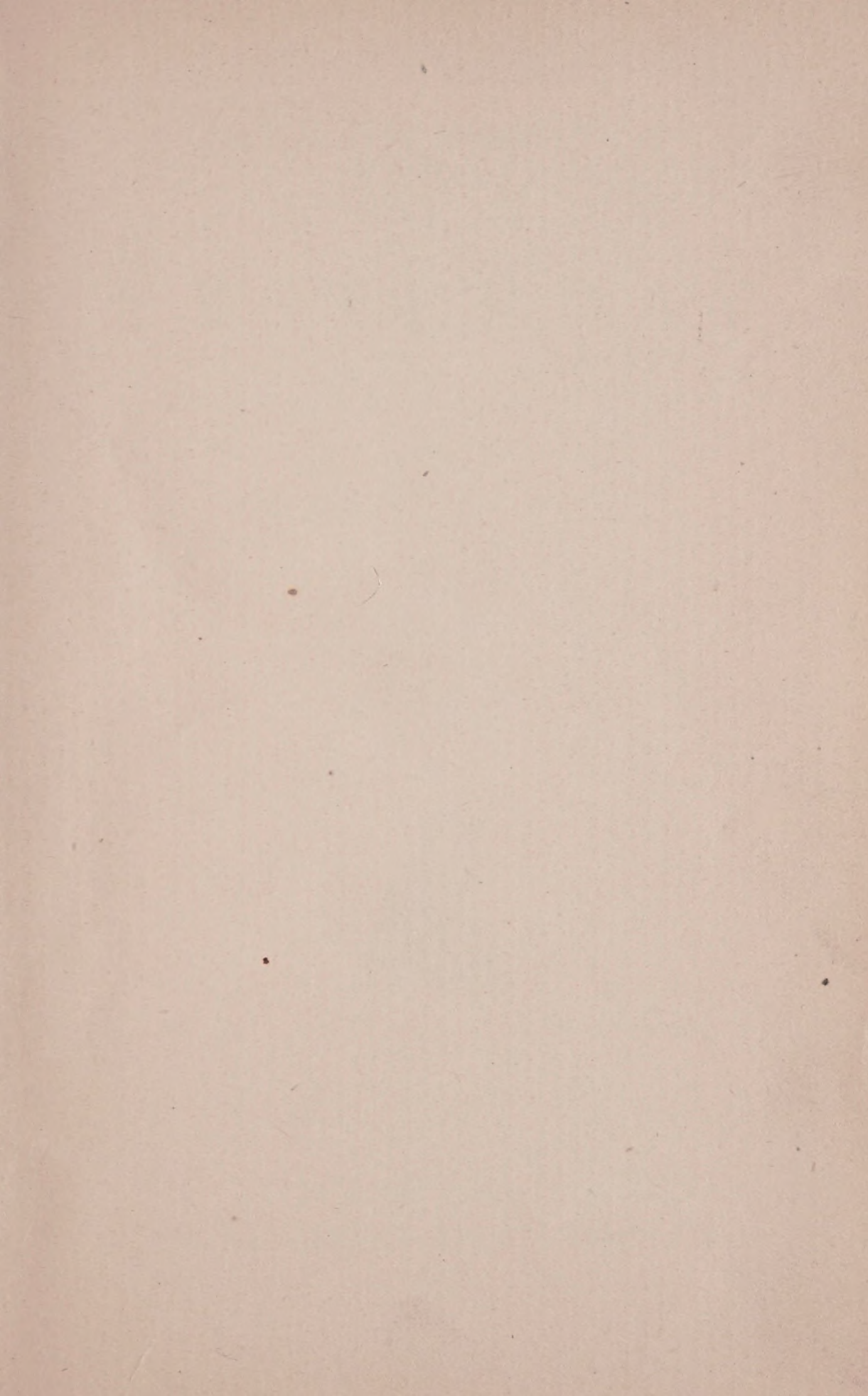
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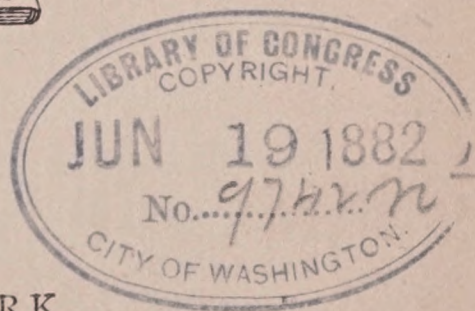


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AN AMERICAN NOVEL



NEW YORK  
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1882



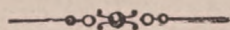
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# YESTERDAY.



## CHAPTER I.

“WELL, Mont, where’s the next house on your list?”  
“There you are, that white gate to the left.”

“That? Here, you,” to the driver of the long, open wagon, “stop a bit, will you, and let’s look about us.”

The wagon therefore drew up at the gate. The first speaker—a showy man with coarse, dark hair, and thick, brushy mustache, a loud voice and a louder laugh—gave a long stare up the straight drive, between the old willows just breaking into leaf under the April sun. At the end was a large old-fashioned white house with high steps. Having considered it a moment, he again addressed the man behind him—

“Room enough; but not too shady. No chills?”

“Not a shiver. I’m too careful of myself for that, Goring, I promise you.”

“Mont,” or Mr. Monteith Tyne—to give him his full name—was a contrast to his companion, being, if also



tall and large, rather thin and plain; ugly, one must have said, but for an air of distinction that made him almost handsome again. He had a worn look when he was not speaking, which gave him the appearance of being the oldest of the party. Beside him sat the youngest, whose amiable, but not over-wise and still boyish face ended in a chin so narrow, that he had taken the precaution of filling it out betimes, with a pair of blonde whiskers. This individual now put in his word.

“I want a few trees; haven’t I my hammock to swing?”

“You lazy chap!” Goring retorted, laughing. “You’ve nothing to think of but to measure your length when you choose summer quarters, Charley Corbin.”

“Well, shall we drive in?” asked Tyne.

“No; don’t do that,” said Goring. “We needn’t all look at every house; and I want to smoke. I’ll stop here, and the rest of you fellows can interview the old man, or old woman, or old monkey, or old donkey, or whatever it may be.”

“Have it your own way,” said Tyne, “but be civil; the old lady’s my aunt, Mrs. Bishop.”

“Hallo! Then it’s a family job? Still, as you say, you know when you’re well off. I’d trust you to make yourself a soft nest any day.”

“Oh, Lord!” exclaimed a fourth person, sitting behind Corbin—a very handsome, but very hard-looking,



red-haired man this, who was leaning back rather gracefully, and twisting a soft mustache. "Do you suppose Mrs. Bishop would ever let a house to any of us? She has a soul above greenbacks, and we are such wild young fellows."

"You go and talk to her, and she'll soon come round," said Goring. "You've got a tongue, you!"

"I, my diplomatic friend! My strong point in this neighborhood is discreet silence. The old lady has her prejudices; she thinks I get tight and smash furniture; I should only rub her fur the wrong way. Mont, you dutiful nephew, it's your turn."

"Very well, Hawk; I'm off."

"But won't you get a thundering lecture!"

"What for?"

"Your hat. It looks as if you'd been on a 'bust' already."

"That's Goring's fault for making us try the short cut by Rossiter's farm. If I had known that Rossiter hadn't trimmed his cherry-trees in the century, I would have vetoed that. And, Lord love you, Goring, don't light up while I'm here; I shall catch it worse if I go scented."

"Anything for a quiet life," growled Goring, and threw his match into the road.

"But where'll we keep our boats?" Corbin suggested.

"This house is on the wrong side."



“Mrs. Bishop owns the water front and the boathouse on the field next Start’s Hotel,” answered Tyne; “and if she hasn’t leased it to him, as she talked of doing, it goes with the house.”

“Well,” said Goring, “go and see anyway, Mont, will you? The other places we’ve been to are beastly holes; and your relations must keep a house fit to live in. We’ll depend on you, for if she’s particular, such a rattling gang had better not show all at once. If you’re nervous, though, take Sundon along; he’d do more good than harm.”

Goring leaned over as he spoke, toward the last of the party, who sat beside Hawk,—a place many a man would not have cared to choose, on account of the comparisons sure to be drawn on the score of personal appearance. Such a neighborhood brought out the special defects of the person present,—a forehead a little retreating when seen in profile, a too short neck, a heavy though not awkward figure. His hair was light brown,—a more fashionable shade than Hawk’s—but it was very straight, having none of those natural waves which the prettiest girls of the season envied. On the other hand, his eyes, gray, like his companion’s, were several shades darker, with sensitive pupils narrowing in light, or widening in shadow,—a detail unexpected, and to a careless observer’s fancy out of keeping, in an organization so full of physical vigor; but one which in itself gives an air of mobility and ex-



pressiveness to any countenance. The effect of it was borne out by the well-cut curves of his lips, not entirely hidden by his light mustache. The combined suggestions of his face made up a rather puzzling whole. A suspicious critic might have come to the conclusion that he had finer instincts than had been done justice to by the average course of his life.

He had been listening to the conversation with a smile, but taking no part in it. At Goring's address he put on a deprecating air, and answered in a tone of evidently affected softness—

“What! I to go first, when there's a lady in the case! My dear fellow, you are too complimentary by half and three-quarters. After you.”

Goring roared. “What first-rate taffy, Harry! Try that style on the old lady, and she'll let us off half the rent, if Mont doesn't look out sharper for her interest than ours.”

“Oh, I'm nowhere as a fascinator when you're about.” More laughter. “But seriously now, shan't I make mischief, Mont? Haven't I heard you say the old lady had a horror of the profession?”

“So great, that she don't even let herself know who belongs to it. You're safe there, I believe.”

“I say,” broke in Goring, “we're losing time. Harry, haven't you to be back early?”



“True enough.”

“So have I. Look here then; you see the house while Mont takes us on to the next one. Where is it, Mont?”

“Firebrace’s, on the water-side—not a hundred steps farther.”

“Man or woman?”

“An old ’longshore fisherman-farmer, half eel and half pine-knot; he’s put himself on the outside of enough whisky and Jersey lightning, for the last half-century, to kill any one else; but it’s only spoiled his temper and preserved him in alcohol, like a snake in a museum. Yes, that’s not a bad plan. You go first, Harry, then I’ll come back for you. My aunt mustn’t think me rude; and Firebrace must be handled by some one that understands him.”

“Oh, leave him to me while you make your call, if you want,” proposed Hawk.

“No, I’d better begin him; you’re too deep—you’d frighten him with your finessing; and we want him at his best, for if Mrs. Bishop has given up her water front, his house may suit us more than hers. So that settles it.”

“All right.”

“Just give me a hint how to start, commander, since you’re at home here,” said Sundon,—speaking now in a brisk everyday tone; but with a voice plainly more musical and of greater compass than the other men’s.



“Go to the front steps,” Tyne answered, “then turn to the right; you’ll see the outside of the house in that way, and then the gravel walk takes you to the little house which was the gardener’s, and that my aunt moved into when she decided to let the other. You’ll find some one there to show you about. You needn’t ask many questions; I know already the house is in repair, and the rent’s not too high; just see if you like it. Mention my name, of course. As for yourself, put on your gravest face, look quiet, and a little sentimental if you feel inclined; the style of the ‘Poor Young Man,’ in fact. Anything short of passing yourself off for a clergyman, in which you might possibly be found out.”

“Do I look like it? Do I speak like it? Good Lord, how badly those clerical fellows do speak! T’other day I went to hear their great gun at St. Leo’s—”

“Oh! oh! oh-h!” from the rest of the party.

“Yes, yes, yes. Just in the way of business, you must know. The papers were all praising his ‘delivery,’ and his ‘elocution,’ and his ‘power over the emotions of his audience,’ till I thought I must see if he knew anything I didn’t.”

“You’re always studying up,” said Goring. “Should think it would be an infernal nuisance.”

“No more than to you to turn over your investments. But this time I was swindled. Gabble, gabble, from one



end of that everlasting service to the other. The sexton put me in a pew with an old maid and a school-girl from the backwoods. At first they were mightily impressed; but about the middle of it the little thing whispers, 'Don't he read too fast?' and the dragon answers, 'These services are so long, he must, to get through in time.' I hadn't quite the courage to ask, 'You mean in time for dinner?' Well, any more orders?" dismounting with the last words.

"No skylarking with the waiter-girl," put in Goring.

"After you, again!"

"Your hat a little straighter," said Tyne. "All right now. Forward march!"

Sundon lifted his hand in a military salute, and walked off with an air of responsibility, in spite of a lurking twinkle in his eyes.

He did not carry out Tyne's directions to the letter, after all; for when he reached the foot of the steps, he saw the door at the top beginning to open, and a glimpse of black dress and white cap. "The old lady must be there," he thought, and mounted up to see; but when he reached the top, he found himself unexpectedly confronted by a woman nobody could have called old. Her brown deep-set eyes looked a little hollow and weary, and her cheeks were pale, as if she was recovering from an illness or a shock; but her lips were red and fresh, and the



short oval of her face was completed by a smooth, broad forehead, from which her soft brown hair, growing rather low, was put back, in the fashion of the day. She wore the simplest of long black cashmere dresses, and a little white muslin cap. "Not the old lady, and certainly not a servant," Sundon thought; "a widow, or a girl? I can't tell. Some near relation, at any rate. Mont should have told me—" with a glance back at the wagon, which, however, by this time had gone on. He bowed, and inquired for Mrs. Bishop.

"She is not at home," was the answer. ("Pretty little soft voice," he commented to himself, "but wants color as much as her cheeks. Why hasn't Mont tried to warm her?") "I will take any message for her."

"I would like to see the house, if I may. I came from New York this morning on purpose to look at houses."

"I will show it to you. Of course, in Mrs. Bishop's absence I cannot do more. But no one has even the refusal of it yet, as far as I know; so it would be worth your while."

They went together through the rooms, large, scantily furnished in a style long out of date, with everything removed that gave an air of modern daily occupation, but much remaining to suggest old days of formal prosperity. It was a house that would be cool and airy in summer, and the large garden at the back had many shady nooks,



besides promise of vegetables and fruit in the sunny spaces. Unfortunately the young lady had to inform Sundon, that Mrs. Bishop had let the field on the shore and all its belongings to Start. "None of the houses on the beach are to let either," she added, "except Mr. Firebrace's, which is rather cramped, if you have a large family."

"There are five of us, not counting servants."

"Are any of them children? Mrs. Bishop wished me particularly to ask."

"Why, no," said Sundon, laughing, "we are five full-grown bachelors, though we still keep up our boyish passion for dabbling in salt water. One of us you must know already,—my friend, Monteith Tyne." Why had he not named him before? He could not tell; some vague fancy of observing the ground for himself had led him on.

"Yes," she said, "he is my cousin. He could not come himself to-day, then?"

This remark, made with decided animation, was the first she had volunteered not strictly in the line of business.

"He has gone with the rest to have a look at Firebrace's, but will be here directly. It's plain he did not hope to find you, or I should not have been allowed to come alone."

"I hope he will not be long, for I must go very soon



to the train for Mrs. Bishop; though I am not sure she will return now."

("She wants to see him," thought Sundon. "Query, how much?")

"If you think it worth while, you might wait and see her yourself; still I am not quite certain. But I must excuse myself, to get ready; you have seen everything—Why, this has been left; I must take it over."

They were again at the house door, and she had caught sight of a basket packed full of books, standing in the hall. She began to lift it.

"Don't," said he, "it is too heavy for you. Let me carry it."

"Oh no, thank you."

"At least let me help you with it."

It ended in their taking it between them to the "other house," a little old low wooden structure, close on the road but for a low ragged hedge. The lady looked about her a minute, as they set the basket down on the veranda, then said, "Many thanks; now don't let me detain you."

"You are not off yet yourself?"

"I am waiting for my horse and wagon."

"If I might wait with you till Mont comes—and here he is."

Tyne was just entering by the gate in the hedge. He



walked quickly up, with a start and an air of surprise; the lady met him cordially.

"Why, Grace!" he said. ("The name suits her exactly," thought Sundon). "I was sure you were in Philadelphia!"

"No; Cousin Sarah wrote at the last moment that the children were sick, and I had better not come."

"Of course; you are not up to playing the nurse yet. Where's aunt?"

"She stayed last night in town. I am just going to the train for her."

"You don't mean to say she left you all alone here?"

"Oh, that's nothing. And I have been showing the house to your friend."

"Miss Delahay—allow me—Mr. Sundon." ("Not a widow then," Sundon said to himself.) "You have heard me speak of him; in fact, though you have not met him, you have seen him before; and I know you have not my aunt's prejudices."

"When, Mont? Oh, I know; when you made up that theater-party last year in Christmas-week. I have a great deal of pleasure to thank you for, Mr. Sundon." Her tone and smile were enthusiastic, in spite of the formality of her words.

"Ah!" said he, "I thought one evening in Christmas-



week that I had a particularly sympathetic audience; that must have been the time."

"Shall I tell you what we said afterwards, into the bargain?" asked Tyne, with a mischievous look.

"Oh, that is all nonsense," said Grace; "it is not even new. Mr. Sundon must have heard too many such foolish things already."

"Were they so very uncomplimentary, as a set-off to the pleasure?" Sundon asked.

"You might not think them flattering," Grace returned, a little embarrassed.

"Let us give him the chance to judge for himself," said Tyne. "My cousin, in spite of her enjoyment of acting as an artistic matter, declared that she not only did not care for the personality of the actors, but hardly understood that they were real people at all. If I had told her they were optical illusions, clever reflections in magic mirrors, helped out by ventriloquist tricks, she would have believed me, she maintained. Now, Grace, you can see for yourself that you haven't owed your entertainment merely to a shadow."

Grace was sitting in a straw chair with broad arms, and was letting one hand rest on one of them,—a thin hand now, but evidently pretty not long since. Sundon put out his own, and laid it lightly on hers a moment, disregarding Tyne's warning glance.



"Is that real, do you think, Miss Delahay?" he said.

She had been smiling; she still smiled as she looked down at his handsome well-shaped hand, large and strong, but whiter and showing less signs of work than most men's. His fancy, however, saw something in her eyes that made him say, "It will be brown enough by and by, I promise you; I mean to go in for rowing and sailing this vacation." With that he lifted it off, wondering why hers should tremble so. How delicate she seemed! It made her for the moment less pleasing to him.

"I assure you, I think you a man," she said. "You will allow for my never having met an actor off the stage before?"

"If our acquaintance is to last, as I hope it is, I promise not to play any part with you but my own," he said.

Grace raised her head a little higher, with a look that went through him like a lightning-flash, and was gone as quickly. Sundon almost thought himself mistaken. Could a young girl, brought up as Tyne's cousin probably would have been, give such glances? It reminded him of nothing less than an experience of the year before with Tyne himself. They had a mutual acquaintance of whom the world said, "His rooms are no better than a private gambling-house;" and once the two happened to be playing cards together there, and for high stakes. Tyne had not quite broken with old habits



on that point then. They both were clever at the game they had chosen, but Sundon rather the best. Tyne cared nothing how it ended, but he knew Sundon to be pushed for money. The luck shifted from one to the other, till at length it took a sudden turn in Sundon's favor; and then it was he had felt that look of Tyne's, so quick no one else saw it, so sharp it was not to be misunderstood. "He thinks I'm cheating!" Sundon said to himself. "He shall see." He played on, and chance and skill combined for him to win. When it was over, Tyne only said indifferently, "I'm going now; suppose you come along;" and talked of other things till they reached his rooms, when he asked Sundon in, and saying, "We'd better settle, now I have the money," wrote a check and handed it to him. Sundon looked at it and tore it up.

"What's that for?" asked Tyne. "That's my writing, and represents so much of my balance; it's neither forged nor overdrawn."

"You think I've cheated you," said Sundon.

"Stuff! If I did, I'd have made a row when I had the other fellows to bear me out."

"You weren't sure enough for that, but you thought so all the same. I won't stand it. How could you, after all we've been through together? To be sure, you haven't tried me just this way before."

"But what should make you think so?"



"I saw it in your eyes."

"What, while your heart was in your play?"

"Isn't it part of my regular business to see two, three, a dozen things at once? It came and went in your eyes, but it isn't out of your mind yet. I won't take your money till it is."

"I know you want it; Brown said so."

"That's nothing to you; I didn't tell you."

"You know I'm always willing to lend, and when you've fairly won, do you think I won't pay up? There now," writing a second check, "unless you want to quarrel with me, take it now."

Sundon took it, and from that time they were closer friends than ever.

Whether there would be any corresponding conclusion with Grace Delahay, it was too soon to divine. Just now she had carelessly answered, "Oh, no doubt"; and Tyne had changed the subject entirely, saying,

"Harry, I'm afraid you'll think I've sent you here, in the matter of the houses, on a fool's errand. Our fellows have fallen in love with Firebrace's establishment, most of all with his dock, and won't hear of anything else. We shall be consulted as a matter of form; but since it's really good enough, we may as well give in."

"We shall still be neighbors this summer, Miss Delahay, I hope," said Sundon, "since I understand you re-



main here; and as I have been fortunate enough to meet you, I may hope to see you again?"

"Probably. At all events I must take leave of you now."

An awkward, overgrown boy had brought round a shabby pony-phaeton, drawn by a bony and unpromising-looking horse. Grace slipped into the house for a moment, and returned with a little black shawl wrapped about her, and her cap exchanged for a close-fitting bonnet.

"Still the same old rattle-trap," said Tyne. "I wonder it holds together, but that beast will never break it up. Aunt ought to give you something better to drive, once she gets a tenant. Remember me to her; ask her to make up her mind to seeing me about here through the summer. But are your plans settled yet?"

"No," Grace answered, "I am hardly strong enough, and there are not so many chances."

"I must see what I can do. Are you off?" Sundon had helped her into the phaeton. "Good-bye; I'll be down again soon, to-morrow if possible."

"Look here, Mont," said Sundon, as soon as Grace was out of sight, while they still stood at the gate; "does our not taking your aunt's house make any difference to that young lady?"

"Not the least. I wish it did; but she depends on nobody but herself."



"You never told me anything about her, do you know?"

"I don't want to get into the way of boring you with my relations."

"No danger. As far as I hear from you, you have none. So then, what is Miss Delahay to you? 'Cousin' don't explain everything; and I rather like family histories when they're not long-winded."

"Well, there were once three sisters; the stiff one, my aunt Mrs. Bishop; the beauty, my mother,—though I don't prove it,—and the clever one, with the heart of gold into the bargain, Grace's mother, Mr. William Delahay's wife."

"William Delahay the banker, that Goring was talking about the other evening?"

"What did he say?"

"That old fellow that broke all to pieces because he was so devilish soft-hearted."

"The same. A case of bad debts, with the panic of '57 to help it on. Goring will never be so easy a creditor,—no, nor half so good a fellow either as my uncle by marriage, who was a much kinder friend to me than the scamp of the family deserved."

"He's dead now?"

"Yes, he overworked to set his affairs straight again, and died suddenly in the beginning of the war; the ex-



citement of those days was the finishing touch. My aunt moved to Yonkers, and kept a little school, Grace helping her in it."

"I remember now, I've heard you speak of them, and known of your doing things for them; but I was stupid enough to fancy them very different sort of people."

"And I stupid enough not to let you see what they really were. For my aunt it's too late; she died of typhoid fever last February. Grace nursed her, was ill herself, and is slowly recovering—the slower the better."

"Why?"

"Because, as soon as she is well enough, she leaves Mrs. Bishop, and goes out as a governess, wherever she can find a place; a hard thing for a young girl, reserved and sensitive, a little proud, fond of society, and fitted for it. If she shouldn't be well treated, I couldn't stand it."

"Mightn't she marry? There's something rather taking about her."

"I wish she might; but she's poor, in mourning, and under Mrs. Bishop's wing, where she sees nobody. And girls haven't so many chances at the best since the war, now there are so many more women than men. If she'd take it, I'd give her half my money to start with; but she never would."



“Why not marry her yourself?”

“For several good reasons; we are first cousins, and I don’t believe in such matches; I’ve seen too much of them abroad. Then I know she wouldn’t have me, and so I am not in love with her.”

“You seem to like each other very well.”

“Just in the wrong way for an engagement. She has been the good little sister,—not consciously, though; she’s not a prig, only rather grave in consequence of a life of care,—and I the naughty big brother, for so long, that we can’t regard each other in a different light. That’s settled. She’s very affectionate, and if there were a man who took her fancy, he would have more love from her than most women can give; but since I am not able myself to love her, I shall never win it.”

“By the way, it must have been she that Hawk was setting down for a starched schoolmistress the other day; how comes he not to know better?”

“I’ll tell you. He has met her twice only, at the Mackenzies; and each time his conversation was based on his pet theory, that a woman likes fast talk, and makes only mock protests. She took it with indignant coldness; let him alone so severely, that he retired, more hurt at not being appreciated than he wants to allow.”

“Very good! Dan’s a little too much even for me sometimes; he’s amusing, but he’s a cold-blooded devil,



and always makes his fun out of the unpleasant side of things. Was the introduction of your giving?"

"No, indeed."

"Nor mine to her exactly."

"I didn't say that. I trust you."

"I hope at least I'm not so green as not to know the difference between your people and some others."

"That's where Hawk's smartness fails him; he rates the whole world too low to begin with."

"Let me see;—how old did you say Miss Delahay was?"

"Oh, you needn't be sly with me; twenty-one, just. I know the family dates."

"That's not too young for you."

"Pshaw! how old am I, do you suppose?"

"I'm thirty-two myself; you may be a year over that."

"Five more."

"Bosh! as long as you're this side of forty, she couldn't—"

"Once for all, that never will be. It's enough that she's willing not to be conscious of my history."

"Oh, if you come to that, where's she to find a man? Isn't it time she understood the world a little better?"

"Do you mean to take that mission upon yourself?"

"No; it's your place, not mine."

"Right enough. But as to my affairs, I hope, on



Grace's account, you don't know exactly what you're talking about."

"You never told me much of anything. Hawk does say you were ill-used, and—"

"Much good his sympathy may do me. I'd rather have his bad word than— But here he comes."

"We don't discuss your family or your concerns before him?"

Tyne nodded. Meanwhile Hawk, seeing them standing at Mrs. Bishop's gate, strolled up to join them, and all three went on together.

"Sorry you've had your trouble for nothing, Sundon," said Hawk; "but unless you've some wonderful discoveries to convert them with, our crowd means to stay at Firebrace's; Goring and Corbin swear they will anyhow, and why should one make a time when one don't care much anyway? so I vote with them. Mont, didn't I see your schoolmistress cousin driving a shocking old horse up the side road just now? I've met her at the Mackenzie's; odd they should ask her there!"

"Why?" inquired Sundon. Tyne took no notice.

"Come now, perhaps she isn't always so stiff? How have you amused yourself with her and the old lady?"

"With neither; the visit was only a matter of business. Is this Firebrace's? It don't seem so neat as the other, but it may suit us better for a vacation."



“Oh, Mont’s promised everything done up fresh for us by the time we’re ready.”

Firebrace’s was a shore farm-house on a low bank just above the beach; a field of potatoes separated it from Mrs. Bishop’s water front, and a neglected garden from the road. Large cherry-trees, planted along the straight walk that led up to the house, and others by the fences, shaded the garden and screened it from the street. Sundon noticed that when one stood at the gate, whatever passed in or out at Mrs. Bishop’s could be plainly seen.

Goring had gone off to the hotel, to arrange with Start about boarding his horses; for neither Firebrace nor Mrs. Bishop had anything to offer suitable for them. Corbin, having picked out his two trees, and been all over the house twice, had returned to the garden, and was staring about at nothing in particular.

“Speculating on the chances of the fruit crop, and the absence of furniture,” he remarked. “I hope there’ll be a fall in camp-stools.”

The house, though as clean as fresh paint and white-wash could make it, proved rather empty; but Tyne declared that he would undertake to supply everything.

“We shan’t want much indoors in fine weather,” said Corbin; “but what’ll we do when it rains, Mr. President and Housekeeper?”



“Plenty. I’ll lay in a mountain of paper novels and a gross of packs of cards; Start’s isn’t too far between showers, and there’s a very tolerable billiard-table there.”

“And a chance of seeing new faces, when we’re bored to death with each other’s,” put in Hawk.

“Well, have you anything else to show one?” asked Sundon.

“Only the view,” said Tyne, “and that’s rather the best thing after all. Come along through here.”

The veranda towards the water was quite narrow, but was supplemented by a strip of garden a few paces broad on the edge of the bank, overrun with young silver poplars, irregular shoots and suckers from a former main tree of which only a stump was left; they would break the force of the afternoon sun, yet would not be thick enough even in full leaf to close the outlook on the bright dancing ripples which came to shore in a gentle surf. A light wooden pier ran across the beach and far out enough for a large sail-boat to be anchored at its end, on which stood a roomy boat-house. This last shut out part of the distance; but by going through it and out upon the rollers or the float, an unobstructed view was gained. You found yourself to be deep in the crescent of Gravesend Bay. Opposite, across the broad spread of the Lower Bay, were the distant Keyport hills; a strip of lower



ground joined them to the blue headland of Neversink, from here seeming to rise just behind the white tropical-looking sandspit of Coney Island, bare and empty in those days, when the Brighton Beaches had not been thought of. It lay clear and sharp in the sun; but a soft haze hung on the Jersey shore. To the right of the dock ran out a low yellow point, the other horn of the crescent, beyond it was Staten Island, the dent of the Clove distinctly marked between its two blue ridges, the flag-crested green bluff of the upper fort and the gray mass of masonry of the lower standing out against the sky, and the yellow beaches meeting the water.

"On my word, I like this place better the more I see of it," Sundon said.

"I hope you do," said Hawk, "or you'll have to look up summer board by yourself. Of course there'll be plenty of mosquitoes, but they're everywhere."

"Where you are."

"Oh, I've ordered a bale of netting already, and charged it to Dan," said Tyne. "We agreed each to contribute something, and I can save you all the trouble of deciding what."

"Well, Harry," said Goring, now rejoining them, "what do you say to this?"

"Oh, it's plenty good enough; why should we go poking round the country any longer?"



“Settled, then. We’ll take the house; you can tell that to your old sea-serpent, Mont. Where is he?”

“Gone to his dinner; he thinks I can be trusted to keep order.”

“That reminds me; we’d better have some kind of a bite.”

“Where?” they all asked. “At Start’s?”

“No, Start isn’t fairly open yet, and lives anyhow while the painters and plasterers are in the house. I’ll take you all to Coney Island.”

“Rather noisy there,” suggested Tyne.

“I know a quiet corner and first-rate oysters.”

“Objections withdrawn.”

“You all second the motion, you fellows? Come ahead then, as soon as we’ve settled with Firebrace; I see him looming up round the corner.”



## CHAPTER II.

GRACE drove along the straight road planted with locust trees, leafless yet, to the sleepy little village through whose main street the railroad passed. The train was just vanishing in the distance, and a tall, bony, forbidding woman in black, with an armful of parcels, was crossing the track and coming to meet her.

"You're late, Grace," said Mrs. Bishop, for it was she.

"I suppose some one has been to look at the house?"

"Yes, Monteith sent a friend of his, but I am afraid—"

"They won't take it? Well, I have a better offer. So that kept you?"

"No, the wagon wasn't sent back from Smithson's in time."

"Smithson is the slowest workman; I hope it's well mended now. Don't turn round; I want to go to the Belden's; those things are for Florence. My telegram didn't frighten you?"

"Oh no."

"I had so many errands, I lost the train, and then



Mary Minot said I must stay— Take care of the rails! if that wheel comes off again— I saw the Mackenzie girls, and they sent their love. What about Monteith's friends? No, don't begin to tell me either; we're nearly there. You'd better tie the horse and come in too."

They stopped at a little white house, not out of sound of the locomotive whistle, and within the village. "Doctor Belden" was on the door. The lady of the house, the Doctor's sister, who had seen them from her window, let them in. She was a little dark woman, bright-eyed and spirited in spite of an air of physical delicacy, which last was evidently temporary and out of keeping. Her welcome to Mrs. Bishop was dryly civil, to correspond to that lady's; but she kissed Grace warmly, with a joking pretense of having to stand on tiptoe for the purpose.

"Are you really off so soon?" said Grace. "What shall I do without you, I who see no signs of getting away for myself!"

"I'm sorry, but it's all settled; I begin to pack to-morrow."

"Do let me spend the day and help you."

"My dear girl! Felix would be down on me at once for inhuman treatment of convalescents."

"What, when you're another?"

"As if a few bad colds in a winter were to lay one on the shelf when spring is so well under way!"



"I thought that Doctor Belden considered you had congestion of the lungs, Florence," said Mrs. Bishop.

"Only his medical name for a trifling affair enough."

"I shall come and see that you do not over-fatigue yourself, as a neighbor," Mrs. Bishop declared.

"Many thanks. Only let me hint that Felix has his own theories of packing, and I shall have to ask you to follow some of them."

"But there must be something easy enough for me to do," said Grace.

"Just one thing now. Come in and talk to us. I've been over my accounts till the air is full of figures, and Felix has been out since daybreak, and only just had breakfast; but now we've five minutes to spare both of us, so come in."

She led the way into a small parlor already half dismantled; her brother was just taking down the last of the few pictures (photographs, and modern, but carefully chosen) from the walls; he turned, and his face lit up with a smile of pleasure when he saw the younger of the new-comers. A tall fellow not far from thirty, his somewhat slight figure yet looked wiry and well-knit. His features were rather irregular, his coloring fair, inclining to the straw-brown tints, and his eyebrows so light as to be almost invisible. Luckily his eyes were large and very deep blue; accented by their color, his face



had a marked expression; and though his heavy light mustache quite covered his mouth, one divined its honest vigor from those eyes. He wore blonde whiskers, though not for Corbin's reason, since his chin was square and well filled out. His clothes looked neat, but far from new; his whole effect was that of the poor gentleman who yet does not waste time in thinking over better days. Some people thought him too reticent for a doctor; others liked him better for that very quality; these last felt that he would not alarm people with dangerous probabilities while there was yet hope, and that he would keep to himself such discoveries in the affairs of households as doctors sometimes cannot help making.

The smile on his face did not linger long; perhaps because Grace met it so gravely; still her voice sounded not displeased to see him. "You are looking better," he said.

"The season does me good," she answered. "I am not like the rest of you, who delight in winter; I am only some forlorn sort of vegetable, that does not really begin to live till spring."

"Yes, Grace's constitution is very extraordinary," said Mrs. Bishop. "When the first mild weather makes every one else languid, she is revived; but that last frosty night, I thought she would be ill again. I hope that did not blight your hyacinths, Doctor; most of mine were withered by it, having come on too fast."



"Oh, ours weathered it famously," said Felix. "We must give you some, to make up for the tricks of the season."

"What if you take our friends into the garden and give them their choice now?" said Florence. "There's Mrs. Phelan the house-cleaner wanting me, and once she catches me, I don't know when I shall get away."

Mrs. Bishop, it now appeared, also wished an interview with Mrs. Phelan, who was a person much in demand in the neighborhood, and therefore not easily secured. So only Felix and Grace went into the little yard at the back of the house, where from one garden-bed spared from vegetables and currant-bushes, the soft mild day was welcomed by such a mass of bloom as contradicted in its richness the plain seeming of the place; yet there were not many plants, only each one of the finest.

"Why, but what beauties you have!" said Grace.

"There are fewer than I should like, but they are good specimens," said Felix.

"That they are, such full heads, and the single flowers so large, and standing out so well from each other. Then you have grouped their colors so well, those buff ones with the violet, that salmon-color with the dark-purple, the pink with the light-blue."

"I tried a hint of yours in planting them. I hope it has succeeded."



“Perfectly.” To herself: “I don’t remember; it must have been some time ago; we met so seldom while I lived at Yonkers. Does he notice so closely what I say? Oh, of course he lays up little things to please his sister.”

“Now I may give you some?”

“Oh no, thank you, you have none to spare.”

“Oh yes, for our friends. Look, those are broken already, you must take them.” To himself: “If I could give her anything better!”

“Thank you. But you should keep that peach-colored one for your sister.”

“There is another by it that will be blown to-morrow. You see this is the last chance I may have of giving you flowers. If it rains to-night, it will spoil them.”

“It is such a little while before you go!”

“If I had started alone, as I first planned, I should have been off even sooner. But when it came to the point, it was better we should not separate. We have let the house already. I think I have prospects, though professions are always over-crowded, even in California, I believe.”

“Do not begin discouraged; surely you have no need.” To herself: “That sounds little enough, but how shall I say more?”



"You are very kind." To himself: "Can she really care, or is that only politeness?"

"I am sorry you do not stay till after I am gone. (How I shall miss him indeed; if we might meet—but chance does not favor one so.)"

"When do you start? (If it only were with us, with me!)"

"I do not know yet; my plans are still to be made; no engagement has offered; I belong also to an overcrowded profession," smiling.

"Surely you need not wait long. (If I had anything to offer worth her taking! But a poor man—my father's son—)"

"I hope not. (If he were to say, 'Come with me,' I would not wait. But he will not.)"

"You have my best wishes. (And nothing more? Must I let her go out into the world to struggle for her own life? Yes, for it might be harder yet for her if she joined her fortunes with mine. I am not a lucky man. She must have friends who can help her better than I, whose aid is very likely more welcome.)"

"And mine are yours. Is that my aunt calling me? (I must not say what he does not care to hear.)"

"Must you go? (Too soon, always too soon!)"

"This is not good-bye yet. (Oh, no, no, no! I shall not lose him to-day at least.)"



“Not quite. We have a few more days. Let me carry your flowers; they might stain your gloves, the stems are so juicy; I will put a paper round them in the house. (Oh yes, and you can do no more for her than that; what are you worth? But some day, some day, if at last she lets me—)”

So these two, with hearts heavy for each other, and each thinking the other cold, rejoined the others.

“You have a long journey before you,” Mrs. Bishop was saying to Florence, when they came in.

“Yes,” Florence answered; “luckily we are not bad sailors. It seems a long way round, though. I suppose now the Atlantic Cable is a fact, we shall have the Pacific Railroad one of these days; if the Indians do not pull up the tracks as fast as they are laid, we shall come back by it to call on you some fine afternoon. In the mean time, Grace, will you write to me once in a while? The first letter shall be mine; don’t forget that the second is yours, if once you agree.”

“Willingly. As often as you send me questions, I shall answer them.”

“That’s a bargain; you shall see how I mean to keep you to it.”

“Are you sure she will care to write?” Felix asked his sister after Grace was gone.

“You foolish fellow, trust me to make her,” Florence



answered. Felix had not taken her into his confidence, still less Grace; but clearer-sighted than either, she divined the state of affairs on both sides.

“Perhaps—” Felix began.

“Well?”

“Oh, nothing; I dare say you know best, after all. Here comes the express with the packing-boxes.”

The Beldens had had much to discourage them in their family history. Felix's father, a merchant well to do and well thought of, when seemingly on the point of winning a great fortune, had sudden heavy losses, and in trying to make them good, became so heavily and questionably involved that he shot himself to escape being called to account. Among the people he brought to poverty was his own daughter, Florence, who after the deaths of her mother and her husband had returned to live with her father, and intrusted to him the care of her little property.

It was just at this moment that Felix Belden had finished his studies, and was expecting to make a fair, perhaps a brilliant start, being considered a young man of great professional promise.

The brother and sister gave up to the creditors everything that was left except some real estate, which, for the moment, was practically worthless, but which they were assured must, in the course of time, rise so much in



value, that the proceeds of the sale of it would be enough to settle all claims. They then retired to the little Long Island house, the rent of which, till Felix could establish himself in practice, Florence undertook to help in making up by fine sewing. "You have nobody to give you an opening in any other line but your own, and you love that too well already to miss succeeding in it," she told him.

"I must get on on your account," he answered, "for I mean myself to assume our father's debt to you."

"That is not fair; indeed I cannot hear of it; you must not do any such thing," she protested, but to no use, as she discovered when the time came. But that was years after. Meanwhile, the month's end brought Felix's first opportunity. The war broke out, and he enlisted as an army surgeon. "Now I have something to do at once, and steady pay for it, if you can put up with my leaving you, Florence."

"It won't be for long."

"Longer than you think. This war will not be finished on the first battle-field; and we shall be only too lucky if the end of the fighting is the end of the struggle."

"Well, anyhow, my dear boy, do you go."

Felix's army career brought him reputation, but not much money. At the end of it, he returned to Long Island, and his small practice there, for the time, but with a determination to venture his lot somewhere else



on the first chance. When a former comrade who had found good fortune in San Francisco suggested to him to try what he could do there, he was quite ready for the move. Two circumstances influenced him further; his sister's health had given him much anxiety through the winter; and his growing love for Grace Delahay made him eager to win the power to test her feeling towards him. They had been children together, and even then sympathetic to each other as children rarely are; of late years they had met less often, but every time had been precious to him. Still, poor as he was, how could he think of marriage? said he to himself. Westward-ho, then! Florence's life and his love might be lost by staying at home.

"The Beldens will be rather a loss," Mrs. Bishop said to Grace, as they drove away; "Florence at least; I'm never quite certain about Felix; scientific men have queer ideas, and his father's son—well, we shall see."

"Nothing but good, I imagine."

"Do you know him so well, Grace?"

"My father always thought highly of him, aunt."

"Your father—I valued your father, certainly; but he was too easy in his judgment of people; some of the visitors at his house I should not like to see in mine."



“Your Cousin Monteith, for instance. I never understood why your mother allowed that acquaintance to go on after he returned from Europe.”

“You were not with us then,” Grace answered. She remembered very well how Tyne had come to see them (“between the steamer and the camp,” as he said, having volunteered on the day of landing), and taken a farewell of his two kinswomen, more sadly than she could guess why, till after he was gone, her mother gave her some hint of a wasted and mis-spent life; and how he had returned when peace came, saying at first, bitterly, “So I have cheated you by not getting killed after all,” and finally, after her mother’s gentle remonstrance: “Well, let me have a little care of you two, and I shan’t feel so disappointed at not meeting my Rebel bullet.” But none of this would she tell to Mrs. Bishop, who now went on:

“Do you expect him to keep it up, now you are under my roof?”

“My mother and I always found my Cousin Mont a gentleman, and the kindest of friends besides. I cannot forget that at your asking; I know what is due to you; but, you see, I owe him something also. If you wish, I will tell him not to come to see me at your house; but I shall not like to give such a message, for I do not think it fair to him.”



"Tell me one thing, Grace; are either of you in love with the other?"

"No, aunt, you may be easy on that score."

"Well, then, I suppose he may visit you. He understands what I think of him."

"Do you really know anything against him since he came back from abroad?"

"Only that he still goes about with a good many very worthless men. I would not care to have him and his party in my house, if I never let it; besides I have a very good offer already; the Waldrons will come to see us to-morrow, and I think I am sure of them. I've heard of Monteith's friends; a pretty set! Did he bring them all?"

"Only one, a Mr. Harry Sundon."

"Brought him to my house, and you there!"

"I was not supposed to be."

"I must speak to Monteith. Why, Mr. Sundon's an actor."

"Yes. Is that all?"

"All I know positively. People tell you in a general way that he's very dissipated. But of course he is if he's on the stage. They all are. He must be a vulgar creature, to judge from the pictures of him that stare at you from every tobacco-shop in New York." Mrs. Bishop was more observing, in her own fashion, than her nephew supposed.



“They do him no more justice than usual with such things. He is rather handsome, and not at all vulgar; at least, he knows how to take his cue from the people he meets, and would not be familiar if he was given no chance; still, I do not believe I should ever like him himself as well as I do his acting. But who are the others? Mont did not tell me; only said they would take the Firebrace house, after all.”

“There’s Charley Corbin, his mother was an old schoolmate of mine, Kitty Doon; she’s a widow now, and he gives her a great deal of anxiety.”

“He seems a harmless sort of youth by nature, after all.”

“Maybe. We might have him call here, since you know him; his mother would like it. Ever since he was taken into Mr. Goring’s office, she has been very uneasy.”

“Mr. Goring the banker?”

“Yes.”

“What is he like?”

“A great noisy man that talks loud in boats and cars, and keeps all sorts of extraordinary horses, and is very rich and extravagant, and drinks, I am sure. It was a good business position for Charley, but Kitty feels the moral influences there are bad, and begged me that we would try and counteract them; after such a request from a friend we might make an exception, in spite of our



mourning. Mr. Goring, you see, is of this party; and so is Mr. Hawk, your friend Emma Minot's admirer."

"I have no fancy for him, and I hope she has none either."

"She has refused him. Her mother told me so."

"I don't wonder."

"Nobody seems to know much against him; he's very clever, and very successful; but everybody's afraid of him. The Minots thought him mercenary, too. To be sure they are suspicious."

"Poor Emma! Poor little heiress! I am glad I have no money."

"Ah, Grace, money is a good thing, after better ones, of course. When I think that you might have been as great a match as Emma, if your father had only been more prudent!"

"I would rather be as I am."

This Mrs. Bishop could not understand; nor did Grace expect it. She knew that with her mother she had lost for the time sympathetic womanly companionship.



### CHAPTER III.

HARRY SUNDON was an actor by destiny, one might say; the representative of a family whose traditions were of the stage, so far as they could be traced back, with little interruption. The original stock was English; the first one known of it, Jack Sundon, was a foundling picked up by a kind-hearted farmer one winter evening in a lonely lane; he took his surname from the nearest town, when he came to need one; who or what his real parents were no one ever knew, though the farmer's wife always declared at least one of them must have been of gentle blood. Jack, as he grew older, certainly had a natural grace and curious wayward brilliancy different from the plain people about him. His adopted parents expected great things of him; but they died when he was only fifteen, and the next of kin turned him out to shift for himself. He joined a company of strolling players and made his way gradually to London; there, after a hard and disheartening struggle, he found himself at last one day a popular actor. The



diarists and letter-writers of the last century record their enthusiasm for him, some even preferring him above his more famous rivals on account of a certain strong and serious simplicity in his acting, which they declare to have had wonderful effect in tragic parts. However, his career was short; he died of a malignant fever at thirty-five in the prime of his powers and success. He left a widow and one child. The stricken woman, disowned before by her prosperous "tradesman" father for her marriage, had been devoted to her husband; and notwithstanding his uncertain temper and wayward nature, he had recognized her devotion enough to make her happy in her recollections. She brought up their boy, Alphonso, to admire his father and his father's profession; so that in due time he also appeared on the boards, and in similar parts.

Unfortunately the inevitable comparison between the two Sundons was not at all in the younger one's favor. Alphonso had failed to inherit his father's simple genius; with a certain amount of talent, he was studied and affected at his best after all. His character showed the same differences; instead of the dash and spontaneousness of an imprudent but attractive nature, he was as formal, cold, and "respectable" by temperament as his own maternal grandfather could desire. An early marriage with a lively little actress of French parentage



was rather out of keeping with all this, it is true; but Stella died at the birth of her first child. When in good time Alphonso wished to marry again, he chose a wife from among his mother's people, and was allowed to have her, on condition of leaving the stage and going into his father-in-law's business. This he not unwillingly did, for his theatrical career was threatening to end in failure in the near future. He was not so very much more successful in his new line, but on the whole it pleased him better. There were a number of children by this marriage, staid and practical young people one and all; these finding it hard to keep afloat in England on means a good deal limited by the need of dividing among so many, sought their fortunes in Canada; they were too excessively British to approve of the United States as a place of abode, beside, their father had had a not over lucky theatrical trip there, which made the family connection look upon that country with great distrust.

It happened though that Alphonso Sundon's eldest boy Frederic, being of a different strain, turned out otherwise. His father looked upon him from the first as a memorial of mishaps which it would have been more agreeable to forget; he was poor little Stella's son, and born during that unfortunate American tour. Still, when he began to develop into an unquestionably clever young



fellow, much more promising than his brothers and sisters, Alphonso dreamed of a distinguished clerical career for him. It was a rude awakening when Fred declared he would hear of no such thing; that he meant to go on the stage, and in comedy at that. The young man would have his way, his father's opposition proving entirely futile. Furthermore, two or three trips to America brought Fred to make the United States his home; he rarely visited England henceforth, and without actual quarrel became notwithstanding estranged from his family; his father excepted, they had no more to do with his history.

Fred Sundon's professional success was very marked, and continued all his life; he played to crowded houses till within a week of his death. He was all the more popular perhaps that his talent was not of a genial kind; his great strength lay in those touches of satiric bitterness which are always the fashion, always in common nature; touches which are usually imagined refinements, though in actual life they mark the street-boy and the school-boy rather than the man who really knows the world; this was his art, in which he was perfect; it was neither affectation nor study with him; he was born a comedian, not for love of laughter or enjoyment of life, but from the demands of morbidly keen critical instincts and of a sense of the ridiculous which was an analyst's, not a humorist's. His first deliberate criticism was of his father,



as a decidedly absurd person (though, through all their oppositions, he could not help some affection for him); and he did not spare any one else more; neither had he any pity for himself; perhaps his sharpest wounds were those given him by his own blunders and shortcomings. As he made no secret of his disposition, he had few friends; most people were moved to impatience by his outspoken bitterness; and the world, which expects those who amuse it to be always amusing, without stopping to consider on its part what the quality of the entertainment may portend, voted him insufferable except on the stage. This pleased him in a grim way, as many things in life did that would have distressed other natures; but not all; he had his tender spot too.

There had been one crushing disappointment in his life, which he could not laugh at or ignore,—his marriage. He prided himself on never being taken in, and was sure he understood the woman he fell in love with; though he had great confidence in his own powers of pleasing when he chose, he was inclined to think he ran some risk. Still he ventured his happiness for the sake of her beauty, her gayety, her easy temperament that rested him from his own. Afterwards he wished that he could have pleaded blindness at first, and thereby gained the right to reproach her more. Still he clung to her till she forsook him; then he let her go without



further effort to retain her. She left him their child, a boy of six years old, whom she had also loved a little while, then neglected, disregarded, forgotten. Fred Sundon, in the bitterness of his heart,—wounded in his love and in his pride, thinking himself the joke or the pity of his acquaintance, ridiculous as well as injured in his own eyes,—imagined at first that the last ridicule and the last injury had not been spared him, and that the boy was probably not his own. Still nothing was sure, and the creature could not be thrown away with the mother's old gloves and broken fans. Fred heard of a country boarding-school which was highly recommended and not at all dear; he sent Harry there, and forgot him for the time.

A day came, however, when Fred, having an engagement for a season in England, took the first occasion to see his father, now grown very old. Alphonso was cared for by a stiff little daughter of the second brood, who only waited his death to join the rest in Canada. He had become so indifferent to life that she was startled at the enthusiasm which he showed in renewing old ties with the son of his youth,—a half-brother who actually frightened her, he was such an unaccustomed personage and had such a man-of-the-world air. The grandfather had been brooding, it soon appeared, on the thought of the grandson he had never seen. The mother being



now dead and safely out of the way, Fred was willing to consider the idea, and had begun a letter directing that Harry should be sent out to him, when Alphonso suddenly died. The letter was not finished; but from that time Fred's thoughts began to center on Harry.

"The boy can't be left at school for ever; he's fifteen already; I must do something with him," was the first idea; then came the question, "what?" followed by the conviction, "I must see him before I can tell." The few duty letters Harry and the schoolmaster wrote gave no clew as to the real nature of the boy; nor any information to speak of about the school either. At that the father grew uneasy. If the place were a bad one, perhaps, and Harry were injured by harsh training, stunted in body or mind, made sullen, cowardly, false—

Fred had almost forgotten his old suspicions, and could now hardly wait for his engagement to be up before he went to find out the result of his first indifference. When at last the time came, and he saw his boy again, the relief was great, even to the extent of making a movement in his life towards happiness,—a change he had believed absolutely impossible.

The school turned out "a very harmless one," as Fred put it. The air and climate were good, the other influ-



ences not bad; the boys had plenty to eat, and were not overworked. In the matter of scholarship the institution did not rank very high, but whoever wanted to learn something could at least make a good beginning; while for play such as young growing creatures need there was plenty of chance; they rowed and swam in summer and skated in winter, there being a river convenient; they had a large playground, where a base-ball nine practiced its way towards what nowadays would be amateur distinction, and smaller games filled up the corners; the farm which provided supplies for the establishment, being near at hand, contributed to occasions of amusement in various ways. If the discipline was slack, at least it gave little room for temptations to evade it; and so few things were forbidden that the boys had not much to be deceitful about.

As for Fred's own boy, the father found him "surprisingly attractive," he said. Harry was unquestionably a Sundon, though handsomer than they had been since Great-grandfather Jack's day. Fred inclined to lament his own looks, notwithstanding their defects were sometimes an advantage professionally; but he was pleased to see that Harry "had a fairer start on that line." Then he had feared shyness, instead of the frank welcome he had met; and awkwardness, whereas Harry was quick and easy in movement and manner; and stupidity, when after all the



boy was the cleverest in school. Not the best scholar, though. The master lamented that he would only do what he fancied, and that his inclinations were only strong in the way of "speaking pieces" and kindred matters; no other studies interested him, and with all his abilities he was generally behind the duller but more painstaking of his companions. "I confess, Mr. Sundon, I am at my wit's end with him sometimes; promising as he is, I do not know what you will make of him."

"Something in my own profession, I rather think," answered Fred. "That's good enough for any man who knows how to do it."

"Perhaps he would prefer some other calling, though," suggested the schoolmaster, with an involuntary air of mild surprise.

"Oh, he shall have his say; I don't force any one belonging to me to go against the grain; I know it's no use. We'll have a bit of talk together by ourselves, and I'll soon see what he'll turn to."

As his father had hoped (though not expected, holding the theory of the contradictory nature of things), Harry took at once to the idea of acting. "What fun! I should like nothing better."

"Not so much of a joke as you think, though. If you want—and I hope my son does; I did—to distinguish yourself, to do something better than make a living, and be



something more than the common run of stock actors, it isn't enough to trust to your wits and your observation. You'll have to study hard if you mean to be what you ought."

Harry's face lengthened a little.

"I shan't be satisfied," Fred went on, "till I see you as good an actor as the French ones; and if you should come short, don't let it be for want of trying and working for it. I tell you what, the thing's worth doing, though you mayn't believe me."

"Why shouldn't I, father? You've had the chance of knowing."

"That's something, if you see that; I was afraid you wouldn't, since you've had no experience; but now you shall have. I can't do anything else for you, but I can do that; I know my world, and have influence in it, but not in any other. There I can push you when you're fit to be pushed; nowhere else."

"Oh, I'll make the best of it, and I'm sure it's worth while, don't be afraid. I've heard of you, father, way up here just as much as anywhere; people know all over the country who you are and what you can do; you've made a name that even the newspapers can't get away from you."

"And you must do as much, and more if you can; if you can beat me at my own game, so much the better. We'll see." Fred felt a curious unaccustomed thrill as



he spoke, more of pain than pleasure. "Here I have been forgetting my boy," he thought, "and all this time he has been proud of me."

For the next ten years the father and son were constant companions, and great friends in their own way. The young men wondered how Harry got on with such a queer old bear; the elders, how Fred Sundon, who inclined to a quiet life for himself, could put up with such a reckless young Bohemian. But Fred declared, "I expect boys to be cold and selfish, and any warmth or generosity on the part of mine pleases me a long time, particularly as the times lap over;" while Harry's answer was simpler: "How can you quarrel with anybody that, no matter what he says, always leaves you to your own way?" Certainly Fred never tried to control his son's actions; he spoke his mind frankly when anything seemed amiss to him, and that happened quite often; but that was all, from the first. "What can I do?" he said. "The boy's too old for me to be beating him or locking him up, and if I keep him short he'll be borrowing of people who can't very well lend, next thing. He'll know better some day; I've been as foolish in my time."

"Yes, boys must sow their wild oats," commented an elderly acquaintance, who had by no means left off that kind of field-work.

"It's done you so much good!" said Fred, with a sud-



den snap, which so disconcerted the speaker that he forgot he had come to borrow five dollars.

Not long before his death, Fred spoke out once for all what he hoped and feared.

“There’s no question to me, Harry, that you’ll be the best of us; you have a career before you; you can trifle as well as I, and you can make melodrama seem real tragedy, which I can’t. You won’t have me to criticise you much longer, I think; and now you can do without me, and it won’t matter. But I wish I could be as easy about your personal as your professional future; I see rocks ahead there, and I don’t see why you should waste your time finding them out. You will, though; you’re your mother’s son as well as mine, worse luck. You’ll never be false, but you’ll always be too fond of your own way to think beforehand of where it may bring you.”

“You don’t think I’m a fool, father.”

“No; but I think you do plenty of foolish things, and some day you may slip into something more than foolish, and not get out of it. If you could live for your profession alone, you’d be safe; but I don’t believe any one ever did, and I know you can’t; it’s not in you, you’re not strong enough.”

“You’ll see that I am.”

“I shan’t see that you’re not, you mean. Don’t promise what you can’t do. I’ve loved you better than



anything else, but I've understood you, just as I have other things. I shall hate it, not to be about any more to help you out of tight places; but my time's coming."

It did come, sooner even than Fred expected.

In spite of Harry's genuine love for his father and grief for him, certain people declared that Fred Sundon had had no real influence over the young man, and that "he would go to the dogs without stopping now." They were soon put in the wrong. Harry had much in himself to distract him from any one course of life, to be sure; a social temperament (in spite of a quick temper), a great deal of curiosity about his fellow-creatures and their ways, and an unlimited capacity for enjoying himself, simply as well as luxuriously. Besides, impulsive as he was, he was capable of receiving impressions at once sudden and lasting; a feeling which came quickly did not always pass away as soon with him, but was likely to remain or return. Most people will not believe there are such natures; but it is true.

Notwithstanding, the stuff of an artist was in him, and his father had brought it out; with comparatively little trouble, too; since Harry, beside the love of his work and the ambition to succeed, was gifted with a natural ease in using his powers such as is not the portion of every genius even; this might have been a disadvantage and a cause of failure, to be sure, and yet it



did not so turn out. Certainly a young fellow with only self-control enough to check him from making himself ridiculous to his companions, and no fixed principles beyond the idea of keeping his word and cheating nobody, may lead a very unsteady life. Still such a man is no worse, better indeed, for having a calling which demands—as all artistic callings do—that, to produce any succession of important results, both body and mind must be a good deal in tune. Otherwise the brilliant record cuts itself short after the first page, or dwindles into mediocrity. Harry was too proud at heart to accept either of these alternatives.

He had not, as a young actor, the personal popularity of some; but that troubled him little. “The ladies don’t all want my photograph, as they do So-and-So’s,” he said; “but those pretty little hands can’t clap loud, after all; so we are even.” Part of his audience indeed declared that he played the villain too well for them to forget it when they saw him as the lover in the next piece; and part preferred a tragedian’s costumes and speeches to the more everyday appearance and language of a “dress-coat actor;” such a judgment was more the fashion, perhaps, when Harry’s career began, than it would be now; people drew the line then more sharply between the “legitimate drama” and the “adapted French plays” in which he found his element. Not-



withstanding, he had a strong party, particularly among the men, who voted him "a capital actor, and a first-rate fellow besides; best company in the world, for all he's a trifle quick-tempered. He's too much of a man for the girls, that's all." This was Goring's opinion, and he was an authority in masculine circles. But there was another side of the case (which Goring would have laughed at, to be sure, had he known it, not having any such feeling himself). The truth was, that though Harry was ready to make himself agreeable to women if they came in his way, he did not then think their society worth seeking. He had a secret sensitiveness which led him to resent patronage always, and even petting sometimes; intercourse with the better class of women seemed to him to involve both; he did not feel with them as if he was being frankly met on equal ground, and he preferred to see little of them.

The world thought it understood him entirely, when he surprised it in the time of the Great Rebellion, by volunteering in a New York regiment just before Gettysburg was fought. "Haven't much to do in the summer, you know, and the —— Theater going to pieces has broken up my winter engagements," were all the reasons he gave; he was afraid his friends of that time would laugh at him if he owned his enthusiasm for the cause and his sense of shame at staying behind. But people guessed it,



and when he came back to New York at the end of the war, it made his return to his old place in his own city all the easier.

One thing he brought back from the field was a friend—Monteith Tyne.

Mrs. Bishop had had reasons for her estimate of her nephew; there was enough in Tyne's past to make him still seem a doubtful person in many eyes. He had been born rich and clever, but, with no inherited business connection (the fortune came through his father's luck in selling land that had hitherto impoverished the family), and no special fancy for any pursuit; he was a young man of leisure,—and he used his leisure badly, contradicting a good education and a sensitive temperament.

"It is a hard thing for me," Grace's father once said to a friend, "to see Mont live as he does. He might be anything he chose; he acknowledges he ought to do better, and would like to,—and yet—'*deteriora sequar!*'"

"'*Deteriora,*' very certainly," the friend answered.

"And yet a gentleman in spite of himself," Delahay concluded.

Before the Rebellion, a young man of Tyne's tastes, both good and bad, was likely to spend more time in Europe than in America. In his case, his flying visits abroad ended in his becoming apparently settled there, and for a reason which called forth strong protests from



Delahay, when he came to know it positively enough. "For your country's sake if not for your own," he wrote, on the news of Fort Sumter,—the last time he ever put pen to paper,—“break off this disgraceful affair now, and come home to an honorable service. You are doubly wrong if you stay.” The letter touched Tyne; but he lingered on in Europe, and it was not his own hand that loosed his bonds at last. It had long been settled that the Countess—a very real Countess she was, an Austrian beauty—would marry again whenever the Count died. So she did; but her second husband was not her American lover; he was discarded for one of her own countrymen, a handsome officer who had not found out how many years she was his senior.

Tyne went home with hopes of losing his life in the war, but did not succeed. He distrusted every one at first, except only Grace and her mother; but Harry Sundon won him in spite of himself, and the two men had finally become even confidential friends. It was on Harry's account that Tyne had joined in the plan of taking the house on Long Island, which had been got up by Hawk and Goring, men who did not please him at all, but whom Harry declared “good enough company for vacation.” Tyne had no strong interests of his own any more; he felt himself like a shadow



among other people's realities, a ghost in the land of the living; he could not recover that existence which he had after all destroyed with his own hands; but what his friends thought and did was of vital importance to him.

As for the other sharers in the summer's enterprise, Hawk, though in flourishing business, was by no means always able to amuse himself as he pleased without help; Goring "liked any jolly crowd;" and Corbin was flattered by being allowed to accompany the older men, knew he would have chances of younger mates when he fancied, and besides wanted to see a little more of Grace Delahay.



## CHAPTER IV.

GRACE met Felix Belden a few times more before he went away; but in the company of his family, of Mrs. Bishop, of neighbors, expressmen, people coming in on various errands of business or good-feeling. Before these witnesses neither of the silent lovers allowed themselves any expression of what was tormenting them. Their very farewell was a cool one, since neither dared to show the warmth they felt; for fear of too much, they made each other miserable with too little.

So that chapter was ended, Grace thought; to be sure, she should hear from Florence, but letters are only life at second-hand. Her business was with her own future now. She advertised in a paper or two, put her name and address on the books of a teacher's agency, and waited for her chance; a little anxious under the insistences of both Tyne and Mrs. Bishop, that she should not take whatever offered, as she inclined to do, but choose the best, even if she delayed in making her start.

Mrs. Bishop meanwhile had secured her tenant, Mrs.



Waldron, once Mrs. Pelham, a rich widow, who had surprised everybody by marrying a very insignificant little clergyman, half-a-dozen years younger and half a head shorter than herself. Even Mrs. Bishop could not resist a smile when Tyne said, "Mrs. Pelham was always fond of little pet animals, so no wonder she should have picked up one more when she wanted a special chaplain." Mrs. Waldron and Mrs. Bishop spent a great deal of time together; Grace was glad to be left to herself. Mr. Waldron made some attempts to interest her in Ritualism, but he soon grew afraid of her, and still more of her cousin. Tyne came over to see his "little sister" whenever he was at the Firebrace house; that was often, for he was constantly busy there, amusing himself with making it more comfortable. He had it all his own way; the other men were only too glad to leave it to him; and when, the summer vacation beginning, they all took possession one fine evening, the party paid him the compliment of being pleased with his arrangements.

At first there was a sudden spell of hot weather, and they were quite satisfied to lounge about their own quarters; then a rainstorm from the east made it dull there, and they remembered they had some acquaintances at Start's hotel, now fast filling up. The beach led directly to it, without a fence or a break, passable even at high tide; and that way soon knew their footsteps well. Of



course in weather that melted your shirt-collar as soon as you got it on, one didn't care about seeing people; but when the sun went down or the sea-breeze came up, Start's length of the beach was more amusing than their own. It was an easy place, without much dressing or fuss; you could make yourself quite at home. Indeed one day landlord Start,—a jolly old soul, but laboring under occasional fits of dignity,—ventured a complaint on this ground.

“Mr. Tyne,” he said, taking him aside, “I’ve known you boy and man, and I don’t mean any offense, on my soul I don’t; but if you can keep your gentlemen to yourself a bit, I wish you would just now, seeing it’s the height of the season beginning, and it ain’t so long here as it might be.”

“Why, what’s to pay? I wouldn’t have you put out, if I knew; but I’ve been up the river half the week, and had no idea they were running free.”

“Well, Mr. Tyne, ’tain’t you, of course. You’re always the gentleman, and if you weren’t, you’d keep it dark at least. And ’tain’t Mr. Sundon; I thought he’d be a regular one when he first came, but bless you, he’s no more trouble than you are. But night before last, Mr. Goring, he came over to play billiards with some gentlemen from Pittsburg, and he’d had something to drink already, and they all had some more, and first



thing you know they got into a row over their game, and he pitched a cue at the nighest one, and it broke a window and smashed a lamp, and most set the house afire."

"Oh, that's too bad, to be sure. Send us in your bill."

"No, Mr. Tyne, I don't want to be mean about the glass, and I don't pretend to keep a temperance house neither; but what I mind is, a shindy that discredits my place; for sure enough, two families were off next day, and who knows what kind of a story they'll be telling? And then Mr. Corbin and Mr. Hawk—though Mr. Corbin wouldn't be much mischief if he was by himself—"

"Well?"

"I won't say they don't tell good stories, as far as my own taste goes; I never laughed so in my life as I did at some of them; but if they will sit and talk outside on my piazza by the open windows, when all the old ladies get together just inside, they'll make me trouble with the old ladies, Mr. Tyne."

"I'll see what I can do, Start; Hawk's rather beyond me, but I think I know how to manage the other two." And Tyne strolled off towards his aunt's.

His visits there were little less frequent than at first; and he was often accompanied by Corbin or Harry. Corbin had no idea—though Tyne was in the secret,—that this special privilege of visiting a charming girl,



whose mourning caused her to receive few people, was owing only to his mother's solicitude. Mrs. Bishop made him welcome. But she never could reconcile herself to Harry's being placed on the same footing. Tyne however refused to interfere. "One need not be so formal in the country; Grace makes no objections; my friend has as much need of good society as that boy, and is better worth knowing himself."

"They do seem both on their good behavior when they are here," Mrs. Bishop acknowledged.

"Of course; they recognize that Grace is a lady, or I should keep them away from her."

"It's a great comfort to me that I can trust her with you so," Mrs. Bishop further admitted. "She needs fresh air, and I am not strong enough to matronize her on your boating parties. But if all this should end in a love-affair? To be sure, I shouldn't object to Charley Corbin, and I know she has too good taste to put up with your actor friend."

"Reverse the order," Tyne thought, "and I might agree with you."

As for Hawk and Goring, they had determined sometime before that Tyne's relations were bores; and the ladies, that those gentlemen were insufferable; so both pairs avoided one another, to the satisfaction of all concerned.



## CHAPTER V.

ONE morning late in July, Sundon and Tyne had planned a long sail, and had just made their boat ready, when the wind, which had been doubtful, fell altogether. The sun was overcast, and the day not yet hot; so, having nothing settled to do next, they walked along the beach till they came to the roof of boughs under which the people from the hotel spent a great part of their days. As they neared it, Corbin came to meet them; he had been seeing some friends off.

"There's a whole crowd of new people this morning," he said: "all the world and his wife, not counting the girls— Oh, and there's a head of hair round here worth looking at. We didn't come to any conclusion about real blondes last night; now I've one to show you."

He led them to one side, and pointed out a lady who had taken off her hat, and fastened up her wavy flaxen hair, still damp from an early sea-bath, in a careless twist. Her back was turned to them; she appeared to



be in a reverie, neither speaking to any one near her nor stirring.

"On my word," said Harry, drawing off that she should not hear, "that's worth calling us for. So fine, so light, so much of it!"

"Two shades too near the ash, and maybe not all real," said Tyne; "but it's pretty."

"Oh, it's all her own," said Corbin; "the first I saw of it she took her hat off, and it all tumbled down in a regular cascade, and she just twirled it up this minute."

"Why weren't we here to see!" said Harry.

"But is she pretty herself?" said Tyne.

"Of course, with such hair and such shoulders."

"You're too easy to please this morning, Harry; you may be disappointed yet. I only see such a figure as any other tolerably made young woman's, such another white morning dress with lilac ribbons, such another tip of the newest style of slipper."

"I won't try to settle so nice a point," said Corbin; "but I shouldn't have noticed her hair so much if I hadn't thought her face matched it. Come and speak to the Garay girls,—you know them, don't you?—and then you can tell."

With that he walked round to the front of the platform, and stopped to exchange a few words with some young ladies there; the others, while doing the same,



had a chance of observing the new-comer; the more that she turned to the lady next her, with a hurried question in a low voice, and a glance their way. Harry thought,—and was not mistaken,—that she fancied she recognized him; after her companion had answered her she continued to look towards him,—less shyly, yet not boldly, and with a certain surprised attentiveness. He was quite used to such a thing, and never disliked it; but this time it was really pleasant: she was so pretty a creature, with her great blue clear eyes, her little straight nose, her rosebud mouth and dimpled chin.

Just then a large black-haired florid man, whom most people would have called handsome,—in Goring's style, but for a respectable air that gentleman was not likely to acquire,—came up from behind and touched the blonde lady on the shoulder, saying impatiently, “Are you never coming, Thyra? You haven't changed your mind again, eh?”

She jumped up with a provoked little look, gave him a novel and a parasol to carry, and they walked away.

“Who is she?” Harry asked of the eldest Miss Garay, a lady who he felt was considering him as curiously as the stranger had, but from whom such notice seemed less of a compliment.

“A Mrs. Lang from somewhere in the West, I believe,” was the answer.



"That's her husband, I suppose."

"Yes. I should think he was rather a common sort of man." Miss Garay was particular, and not at all sure that she was obliged to Corbin for presenting Harry.

"He doesn't seem the kind that you would be accustomed to meet," answered Harry, and rose at once in Miss Garay's esteem.

"Well, what do you think of our new beauty?" said Corbin, when, the sun coming out bright, the Miss Garays returned to the hotel and the men to their own quarters. "I thought those girls would never let us go, to give me the chance to ask you."

"Such a valuable piece of information!" said Harry, laughing.

"Charley, you're too cool a hand for your time of life," said Tyne. "First you walk us all round a lady you don't know, as if she were a Venus on a pedestal in a gallery. Then when you meet ladies you've seen before, and they are quite as attentive to you as worth while, you are bored at the notice they have the kindness to take of you."

"Well, yes, they are nice girls, easy to get on with, and all that."

"I should think so; they couldn't do more, short of making downright love to you. How lazy you young fellows are! you don't play your part at all."



“Oh, I’m not so clever as you two, and besides everybody expects the girls to do the polite nowadays, even the girls themselves, Hawk says.”

“Oh confound Hawk! I’d rather be original,” said Tyne.

“But now, Sundon,” Corbin went on, “don’t you think the new one’s a pretty woman?”

“Don’t I, though? I hope she means to stay.”

“What for?” asked Tyne.

“Why, can’t you see what a beauty she is? you, with your first-class eyes? Are you going to put her in your black book on sight? Don’t you now.”

Harry was always teasing Tyne about these sudden and unexpected dislikes which his friend sometimes took to strangers; fancies doubly curious in that the people in question often turned out to justify them.

“To begin with, she has a baby-face that promises no conversation. One can’t only sit and look at a woman all day. Then she studied us rather too openly, yet she affected not to be doing it. And her dress was too much in the fashion, and—well, if she is a beauty, she is a *bourgeoise* one. She never saw a pair of snuffers or a bellows in her life; all gas and furnace-registers in her house-keeping; I know the species.”

“Ah bah! You’re growling because we lost our sail. Your lordship ought to remember there are no *bourgeoises*



in this country; and if there were either, daddyism is just bosh in such a case as this."

"There are plenty of under-bred and ill-bred women, Harry; and she is one or the other. I'm sure of it from that husband of hers. A fine-grained woman, either simple or thoroughly-finished, would never put up with him."

"He looks as if he might bite if you took away his dinner; still I expect he's a good dog enough. But I mean to see more of her."

"Easy enough, I should think; but if I were you, I'd leave her to Hawk. He's likely to find her out."

"Poor thing! I wouldn't for the world. Besides, Dan is going into training for another try at the heiress."

"Then she's the one to be sorry for."

"By the way, this Mrs. Lang has a good deal of color," put in Corbin; "do you think it's paint?"

"No, only sunburn; I know the difference without an eyeglass; but the chances are that in another couple of days she'll be quite too red to please you, or else go about done up in so thick a veil that you can't tell her from our cook—" an old colored woman Tyne had secured in the beginning of the season, of much special talent, but grotesque in her ugliness. "Prepare yourself, Harry."



“Oh, I never look ahead; that’s the one piece of Scripture advice I follow. Who has any matches?”

That afternoon, Tyne went over to see Grace, without either of his friends. She was sitting on the veranda at the back of the house, the shadier side at that time of day; but not alone, as he often found her; Mrs. Lang was there, just rising to take leave, with tears in her pretty eyes, and promising in affectionate tones to “come often, for of course you won’t want to come to the hotel now; such a crowd, and you in mourning.” She delayed a while after Tyne’s appearance; he had to be presented, and took the opportunity of studying her afresh. As soon as she was fairly gone, he exclaimed, “Grace, where did you pick her up? She seems rather bad style.”

“You must not be hard on her,” said Grace, smiling. “She is too pretty for that, and she has not had so many chances of seeing the world as some of us.”

“Tell me about her.”

Grace gave him a short history, which may be a little expanded here.

Mrs. Lang’s father had been a certain Christian Brink, the vagabond son of a respectable Norwegian merchant, who after trying in vain to make something of a young man with no talent for business and a too great appetite for pleasure, packed him off in despair to the United States. Young Brink amused himself in New York as



long as his funds lasted; then he made a fresh start by marrying a young girl with plenty of money, the chance acquaintance of a watering-place, —a simple, humdrum, but rather pretty creature, with none of the tastes of her suddenly-reached fortune. Her father, after years of struggle on a Vermont farm, had tried California, with such luck as rarely falls to miners; and Hannah was his only heir. Brink spent all her money, made her wretched for some years, then died. The widow, with her daughter Thyra to bring up and little or nothing to do it on, drifted about till at last she settled in Milwaukee.

Thyra's first recollections were of pinching poverty, aggravated by her mother's dreary way of taking the world. Mrs. Brink had found her consolation in a bitter asceticism. Every pleasure was a sin in her jaundiced eyes. This reaction against her husband's rowdy ways of delighting himself was not strange for her; but it weighed heavily on a growing girl who had inherited a disposition to gayety, to be not only shut out by narrow means from great enjoyments, but by a narrow creed from little ones. Her mother saw her nature without sympathy; dreading it as something "sinful," she was doubly hard with her. At eighteen, Thyra had never learned to dance, had read only a very few novels on the sly (she was not skillful in deception, and her attempts that way were sure to end in her being found out and punished), and had seen no



public performance more exciting than the tableaux at a church fair, in which she was not allowed to take a part, though she had begged again and again; but even the minister's wife could not persuade Mrs. Brink.

Notwithstanding, when on Thyra's eighteenth birthday one of these rather dreary entertainments took place, and she went to it in an old black dress which did not fit, a dashing young man with his arm in a sling,—Captain Jack Lang, wounded at Fort Donelson, and taking part of his sick-leave for a visit to his uncle, the rich man of the congregation,—was presented to her, and the whole course of her life was changed.

Captain Lang had yielded rather unwillingly to his aunt's proposal that he should escort her that evening; but the meeting with Thyra more than repaid him, he thought; such a lovely creature, in spite of her unpromising surroundings! He kept up the acquaintance thus begun, and pushed it to the point of an offer, which was not made in vain. Having the prospect of a good business position if he should leave the army, and his wound bidding fair to keep him from active service for a long time, he resigned his commission, and contenting himself with subscribing to the Sanitary Commission and drilling a Home Guard, went into business one day and married Thyra Brink the next. This last step met with some opposition on the part of his uncle and aunt; but Lang was



not dependent on them, and was neither to be checked nor crossed. His former officers used to say that this disposition was the real cause of his leaving the army; he had courage and dash enough, but could not bear to be under a superior.

Lang was very fond of his pretty wife; as for Thyra, she was transported, beside herself. After years of poverty and Sunday-schools, what a deliverance, what a new world! To be head of your own house, with money to spend, and somebody actually proud of having you spend it; somebody who wanted you always to be well-dressed, and let you read all the new novels, and learn to waltz; who liked to go to the theater with you, and to take you driving with such a nice horse; it was almost too much. To be sure, Jack had his whims, like all men, and once he got something into his head, there was no turning him off it; but after all he was so kind! So too said Mrs. Brink; shocked beyond measure at first by her daughter's suddenly-developed worldliness, she submitted to it in consideration of her son-in-law's treatment of herself; her father had merely given her money, and her husband had taken it from her; but this man was really thoughtful of her. In fact, Lang liked to make people happy; only, it must be in his own way, which he was so sure was the best that he would tolerate no other.



Mrs. Brink remained in Milwaukee, among her church friends. Thyra and her husband went first to Chicago; then, as Lang's business enlarged, they had removed to New York, his native town, where he had always wished to return, though his parents' death had broken up his home there in his boyhood. The first cloud in Thyra's sky had risen in consequence of these changes of dwelling-place; she had expected that her marriage would bring her at once into "the best society," and could not see why there were still regions beyond her, wide as she had made her circle. It was partly with the end of reaching them that she was renewing her acquaintance with Grace; partly also from a genuine feeling of liking and gratitude. Three years before, Grace and her mother had gone to spend their vacation in a quiet nook of the Catskills; and it chanced that Thyra, advised by her doctor to take her two children into mountain air for the summer, chose the same farm boarding-house. Mrs. Brink was to have joined her, but failed to do so for some weeks. The younger child having one of those sudden touches of illness to which children are liable, Mrs. Delahay gave advice and help to the alarmed, bewildered mother; while, as this state of things lasted several days, and Thyra (who always had a good deal of trouble with her servants) was already left without a nurse, the girl having departed just



before, Grace undertook the charge of the elder (an attractive though rather spoilt little thing), till the vacancy could be filled.

Happening now to hear that Grace was in her neighborhood, Thyra had sought her out, with an added impulse of sympathy from their both having a sorrow to bear. If Grace was wearing black for her mother, Thyra's lilac ribbons were the last of her mourning for the children, who had both died together of scarlet fever. "Now if they only had lived," the mother had been saying just before Tyne's entrance, "they would have been just old enough for you to begin to teach them, and then I could really have done something for you right off." It was this speech that had brought the tears to the speaker's eyes.

"Kindly meant, Grace, to be sure," said Tyne, when he heard of it, "but you may do better yet, I hope."

"Now don't be 'coming the F. F. over people,' as you used to say," Grace answered.

"I don't mean that, I promise you. I only don't want you to go from one unsympathetic house to another. Mere kindness isn't good enough for you."

"You fanciful cousin!"



## CHAPTER VI.

AS the summer went on, it turned out to be not the blazing one that some people had prophesied, but moderate in heat, and very pleasant when the occasional sea-breezes in July became, with the opening of August, the regular accompaniment of every afternoon. Tyne's party was constantly on the water. It had lessened in number. Hawk had gone to Newport, in hopes to prevail personally on Emma Minot to reconsider her decision, since letters had had no effect on her. Goring was shooting and fishing in the Maine woods, successful to the point of twice writing a letter of twenty words, like a double telegram, one to Tyne and one to Harry, begging them to join him. But they and Corbin staid behind, and devoted themselves to boating. Not after the regular oarsman fashion, though. Even Corbin was hardly ever in his shell; he said "the water was too lumpy," and one may believe him; but he certainly preferred a boat that would hold Grace Delahay; and Tyne and Harry were willing enough to help him row or sail it.



Grace was not their only passenger. With Tyne of the party, she needed no matron; but she had one in Thyra Lang, who was always delighted to go on such trips, and was often invited. She had fallen into a way of running over continually to see Grace; though they were too different ever to be real friends, there was a sort of comradeship between them, to which even Tyne did not say nay. Mrs. Bishop did not approve it, but she too let it go; she regarded Thyra as a foolish young woman of inferior social position, over whom however Grace might have a good influence. As for trying to govern Grace, that was impossible; fortunately also it was unnecessary.

Lang sometimes went on these expeditions, but oftener not; not for Mrs. Bishop's reason, for he was a good sailor, but because, though everybody was of course civil to him, he somehow found himself one too many. He explained this for the present by a theory that the three other men were all Grace's admirers, and that a disinterested fourth put them out. This he discussed with his wife, wondering which would win, and inclining to "bet on the youngest." To his surprise, Thyra answered, "What, with Mr. Sundon about?"

"Oh, he's only an actor; she'd never look at him," said Lang, disdainfully; he also had prejudices. Thyra probably did not share them; for she failed to quote this speech when she repeated their conversation to Grace,—



in a modified form, to be sure, but still with distinctness enough to cause that lady some annoyance, though she did not show it and did not alter her manner towards any of her companions in consequence. To be sure, except with Tyne, she was never unreserved.

Grace's social life was indeed a great effort to her at this time; she had to strive hard to enter into what went on about her; it seemed very unreal. This self, whether listening to the lively talk of the rest of the party, or joining in it, was but a reflection in the glass, a vain image of that which had gone back into the past with the beloved dead, or forward into the future with the hopelessly-cherished living friend. She succeeded, however, in hiding these moods from every one but Tyne; he worried over them, but feared to wound her by seeking for the clew to their meaning. The other people only thought she showed the occasional depression natural in her circumstances, but that on the whole she "bore up wonderfully;" so Thyra said.

Corbin and Harry, however, were alike struck with her invariable mental attitude towards themselves. It did not seem to be embarrassment or dislike, but they had never met a woman before who showed such constant though unobtrusive caution and care in what she said and did in their presence. They had been conscious of this from the beginning, but thought it was



shyness, and would wear off. They were mistaken; the barrier remained, invisible, but strong. So far they might come, and it was pleasant to come; up to a certain point she was cordial; but never one step beyond. Corbin, who grew steadily more interested in her, was greatly disturbed by the situation, and longed to put an end to it; but he did not quite dare to try. Sometimes he thought she suspected his secret, and wished to discourage him gently; again he was sure that she was quite unconscious. Now he positively believed she preferred either Harry or Tyne, both of whom he admired himself, and against either of whom he would have thought it hopeless to struggle; now he was confident he had nothing to fear from them. Meanwhile, he postponed any decisive action; the end of the summer would be time enough; for if she should refuse him, how could things go on in the present fashion, one not to be lightly given up, bitter-sweet as it was?

As for Harry, his feelings were a puzzle to himself. What was there about Grace to tease a man so? He could not generalize concerning her, could not rank her under any of the common categories into which he divided women; it would have been a real relief to him, but she somehow made it impossible. Torment him she certainly did, though he was not sure whether it was intentional on her part; he was only certain of



the effect. At first he had followed Tyne's lead, and endeavored to place himself in his best light before her; but after a while—a change, if he had noted it, coincident with Thyra's coming,—some perverse spirit possessed him in her presence, impelling him to say sharp and unpleasant things, to appear defiant and worthless. What was it? She was always the same; rarely gay, sometimes a little sad, never open or frank, but gentle and gracious; not prim, or narrow, or arrogant, or positively cold. Still he felt himself repelled by her; and before long he began in proportion to be drawn to Mrs. Lang.

Thyra's manner was more than the opposite of Grace's. Tyne was disposed to be severe on it. "A baby who blurts out whatever comes into her head! what business has she to be playing the woman?" She could indeed keep nothing to herself; and her likings and dislikings, her tastes and judgments, were no more reasonable than a child's. Fortunately she was easily pleased, or she would have made enemies everywhere. She received Harry with a frank admiration such as was not new to him; at another time he might have treated it a little disdainfully; but now it was very agreeable; in contrast to Grace's coolness (which he began to accuse of hiding a contempt he thought uncalled-for), this pretty deference was not too much. If such a charming



woman chose to be so friendly, why should that girl be so distant? Grace surely rated herself too high. Even her looks were nothing extraordinary. To be sure, they had improved with the season; she was no longer the convalescent; her hair had grown and her color come back; in those black-and-white cambrics and muslins she wore (Harry always noticed women's dress) she seemed quite exquisite sometimes, with her graceful movements, her ladylike air, and that pretty gradual turn of the head when you spoke to her and she had been looking another way. But what was that to Thyra's blonde radiance? She too grew more handsome as the summer went on. Tyne's forebodings about her complexion had proved all wrong; and when she did wear a veil, it was thin white grenadine, such as was in favor that season,—very hard for the wearer to see through, but very becoming in the eyes of whoever saw her. In spite of the defects of her face, Thyra was a beauty, Harry declared, and in spite of the defects of her character, a charming woman. If she did say foolish things sometimes, still Tyne was wrong in thinking her altogether silly. Very likely too he had changed his mind about that; he did not dispraise her now as he had at first. Nor had Harry found Thyra attractive because Tyne did not like her; he was not such a fool, he told himself, as to fancy people for



contrariness; even such a soft young fellow as Corbin, who took his color from whoever he was with, and behaved ill or well, according to the company he kept, knew better. It was a pity though, if that boy were falling in love with Grace; he would certainly be disappointed. Love didn't pay, anyhow. Easy mutual admiration was much pleasanter, and quite enough for a summer holiday.

So they all drifted on together; when unexpectedly a day came after which it was no longer possible for them not to understand themselves.

It was the first afternoon of September. Lang had gone to town on business, and was not expected to return till late; Thyra was with Grace on Mrs. Bishop's veranda. The lady of the house, as usual, had gone to visit her friend Mrs. Waldron; instead of her, Tyne helped to represent the family. Harry had come with him; Corbin had been there also, but had gone down to the beach again, to make sure that the hitherto doubtful wind would grow steady enough for sailing.

Grace had driven her aunt a long round that morning, jogging behind the old horse on tiresome enough errands; then by way of compensation had taken a homeward road through the marshes, where in spite of threatened wet feet and scratched hands,—as if one had not driving gloves and a change of shoes,—she had gathered



a sheaf of the rich blooms of late summer: marsh-mallows, to other wild-flowers what a Veronese is to other pictures, and pyramid-girandoles of Turkscap lilies, fitly called "superb" by the botanists. She had set half-a-dozen stems of these last,—each with its triple tiara of blossoms whose backward-curling petals of orange shading from red to yellow were flecked with dark velvety spots,—in a tall blue-and-white Japanese jar, one of the old treasures of the house. Now she brought them out of the darkened parlor for Thyra to see. "What a picture you make!" said Tyne, as she set them on a little table. But Harry remarked,

"Why, Miss Delahay, that is not the bouquet one expects from you."

"Why not?" said she, smiling.

"All those gay-colored, spotted, speckled things. I thought young ladies disapproved of spotted flowers on principle; which of the authorities says so, Mont? You know you do my serious reading for me."

"Oh, it's in Hawthorne," said Tyne; "one of those tiresome little bits of symbolism he will tease one with sometimes."

"And which mean so much for the ladies. Don't they, Miss Delahay?"

"Not for me. I confess I do not care for symbols, and I love flowers for their own sakes."



“But don’t you like white flowers best?” said Thyra.  
“Everybody does.”

“I can’t say I do; I love color too well. But you shall have some to take home with you; there are a few white pinks and some day-lilies still left in the garden.”

“Thank you. But how can you not like white flowers best? I never heard of such an idea; but there are so many new ideas nowadays.”

“Oh, my fancy is a very old one; savages are fond of bright colors, and in that I am a primitive person too.”

“I am sure we don’t want to be savages, and I don’t think we are,” said Thyra; “but don’t you think generally old-fashioned ideas are the best? Don’t you, Mr. Tyne?” turning on him, before Grace could answer.  
“I’m sure you will take my side,” laughing a little.

Thyra had the theory of Tyne which the hotel had adopted; that he had been “very fast” abroad, but was a “safe man” now, as he intended to settle down and marry his cousin. So she was sure of what she could say to him. She might have well been; for he looked on her as an imprudent child, with whom it was specially shabby to trifle.

“I’m sorry to contradict you,” he answered, “but I can’t. What you call new ideas are really most of them as old-fashioned as those savages with whom we won’t let Grace class herself.”



"Dear me," said Thyra, "I don't know just what you mean."

"And I might shock you too much if I explained. This is a pleasant day; I ought to talk of only pleasant things."

"But," Thyra went on, "you know unpleasant things will happen in this world, and—and all sorts of improper things; and then people always say, 'Oh, it wasn't so when we were young; it is all these new ideas about religion, and—morality and everything.'"

"They are mistaken, I assure you. Nothing is more ancient than what you call improper."

"Would you use a less severe word, Mont?" asked Harry.

"Would I?" answered Tyne, drily.

"Now, Mrs. Waldron, that is your aunt's friend, Mr. Tyne," said Thyra, "was saying only last week, about—well, about that divorce case that was in all the papers, 'Such things never happened in my day.'"

"Clergymen's wives feel bound to make such speeches, I believe."

"I'm sure I'm ready to agree with you, Mrs. Lang," said Harry; "but if I remember right, Mrs. Waldron should be careful how she praises the past; her mother's family had some queer people in it. Doesn't one of your tales of old New York belong to them, Mont?"



He knows everybody's family history, Mrs. Lang; he could make a wonderful book of anecdotes, if he chose."

"I don't care about getting into libel-suits," said Tyne.

"But am I right?"

"Yes. The true history of Mrs. Waldron's aunt, Mrs. Dingle, might have happened in the sixteenth century."

"That! oh, it's hardly uncommon enough. As you told it to me, it was only a case of—well, what any man may do now, go as far as a woman lets him; and why shouldn't he?"

"Oh dear," said Thyra, rather frightened, "I suppose people think so, but it sounds alarming," and she looked at Grace.

Grace flushed a little. "Forewarned is forearmed," she said, very quietly, and looking down. But Harry felt he had spoken too freely for the time and place.

"Here's Corbin," he said turning quickly. "We shall have our sail after all."

"It seems like it," said Tyne, swallowing something very different he had meant to say. "Better by and by," he thought.

The wind was favorable, and the afternoon perfect for their excursion. Harry devoted himself to Thyra whenever he was not wanted to help in managing the boat.



She had forgotten all about their conversation on shore before they were fairly under way; she seemed even more frankly charming than usual, and every look from those great soft eyes was like a caress. But he saw too that Grace was preoccupied and absent, and that Tyne was watching him at intervals in an unaccustomed way. He felt provoked and pleased at once; the summer quiet was turning to excitement with him. When they returned, Corbin having left the boat-house door open, Lang had come in, and was waiting for them at the top of the steps; he not only looked ruffled from his short but warm journey, but his black brows were drawn into a heavier scowl than even the sun-glare on the Bay accounted for. "Dear me," cried Thyra when she saw him, "how you do want shaving, and how hot you are! You ought to have been with us; it's delightful on the water."

"Oh, come along!" he answered. "It's dinner-time, and your friends want to put their boat up."

Harry was helping Thyra up the steps, which were steep, and a little slippery, as the tide had fallen; but as soon as she reached the top, Lang caught her hand and fairly pulled her away from her conductor. The two men's eyes met, with a glance from either that each felt like a blow; but nothing was said. Thyra called back a good-bye to the others in the boat; Lang touched his hat to Grace; then they hurried away, though not in time



to escape a satirically-polite bow from Harry, before he turned to give his hand to Grace. It was hardly needed, for Corbin was with her. Still he had her hand against his a minute—and how cold it felt, after Thyra's, so warm and soft!

Grace walked home with Corbin, almost in silence. Sundon staid to help Tyne with the boat.

“Harry,” said Tyne to him, as soon as the others were out of hearing, “I need not quarrel with you yourself, I'm sure; but if you begin to play Hawk, I shall have no patience left with you, and I shall think I did wrong to let you keep up your acquaintance with Grace; and that's hard on me, for you and she are the only people here I care a copper for.”

“I know it was too bad of me,” Harry admitted; “but somehow your cousin does plague me so; I have no peace when she is about—she sets me on edge.”

“She doesn't mean it; she—well! you ought to understand her, and you will one of these days.”

“Oh, I dare say,” answered Harry, absently; “but I don't care much for your deep people.”

“No?”

“A woman, now, that is shallow enough to show she would rather have you near her than on the other side of the room, and if she don't know anything but how to smile, does that for your sake,—I like that.”



“Harry, you’re too confoundedly sentimental—”

“You ought to know—”

Here the conversation was unexpectedly broken in upon by Mrs. Bishop’s boy-of-all-work scrambling down the steps, with a message from that lady, asking her nephew to join her at her house directly.

“I wonder what’s the matter,” Tyne said, impatiently.

“Is the boat fast, Harry?”

“All O. K. Are you coming back to dinner?”

“I hope so,” hurrying off. When he did return to their quarters, he was plainly out of humor.

“I’m under way for Chicago in half an hour; a trip to the tropics I shall find it just now,” he explained.

“Can’t the old lady go herself? Why need you let her send you?”

“Oh, I’ve some investments there myself that might as well be looked after too, though they are not as important as hers. Pretty much all she has to live on is that property; and her agent has chosen this very time to die and leave everything in confusion. She may be badly swindled if I don’t see to her affairs now, and I will, no matter if all the thermometers in the northwest boil over every day for a week.”

“Well, I’m downright sorry. Come back as soon as you can; there’s never half so much fun without you.”



“Don’t let Corbin burn down the house while I’m gone; as for entertaining Grace, I can trust him.”

“And me. We won’t neglect her.”

“Now,” thought Tyne, “that sounds well enough; shall I say more, though? I’m not easy about our pretty Thyra; but what to do? Speak to Harry? that might set him on, for contradiction, in the humor he is; besides, I have really no right to—I! To her? she is such a fool. To Lang? To accuse my friend to a stranger, and a poor little silly soul to a rough fellow like that? He’d probably beat her and fight Harry, and a nice thing I should have done. To Grace, then? Impossible, impossible! I will wait till I come back, at least.”



## CHAPTER VII.

ON the day after Tyne's departure, Corbin also went off, on a visit to some friends up the Hudson. The next day, therefore, Harry found himself quite alone in the house.

The morning proved a very long one. No wind for sailing; too hot for rowing, and even for bathing, with the sun beating down so on one's head. He went over to the hotel, but found nothing to do there, and no one he cared to see; most of his acquaintances had left, and their places were filled up by stupid strangers. A chat over a cobbler with Start would have been something, but even Start was away for the day. The Langs were invisible; Thyra was reported to have disappeared from the beach with a headache, and her husband to be taking care of her; this information Harry extracted from the stiffest of the old ladies, who accompanied it with a look that spoke volumes of disapproval.

He returned to the house, and looked about for a novel. There was a stack of them that nearly touched



the ceiling; French and English, Tyne's selection mainly, though Hawk had contributed a few; entertaining things enough, but somehow he could not find one that was new; after a dozen pages, he would discover that he remembered it all, and did not care to go over it again. This pursuit, however, kept him busy till lunch-time; after which, returning to it, his patience was rewarded with a couple of volumes he had not read. He went into the garden and settled himself comfortably in the hammock between two cherry-trees. There were no longer any cherries, or even any currants on the bushes within reach, to add to the attractions of the place, but he had a capital cigar, and the rising sea-breeze swept away all the mosquitoes.

He read on for some time; the book was not very brilliant, but much better than nothing. After a while he looked up, and saw the shadows beginning to lengthen; by his watch, it was after three. "A good time to go out sailing," he thought, "and a good wind. Sailing—with Thyra." (He always called her Thyra to himself, though "Mrs. Lang" scrupulously to other people.) "I wonder if she'd like to go now; I might run over and ask her; think I will. Perhaps she wouldn't though. I haven't seen her to-day, I declare; and yesterday only a few minutes on the beach, and then she seemed put out and not like herself. She can't be angry with me? We



‘parted friends’ the day before. • Oh, of course; it’s her husband. Why must she have one? He’s confoundedly in the way.”

Now Harry had quite enough business of his own to think of, without such speculation as this. He had had a letter from his manager that morning, concerning some new plans for the coming season, with an element of change and risk in them that was quite inviting; and the generally independent Mr. Benson actually had asked advice on a point or two, besides. The matter needed consideration at once; but first Harry had put it off, while the day was so hot; and now—

The sound of a gate opening not far off roused him out of his reverie. He jumped up, and went to his own gate to look; he somehow expected to see Thyra, and he did; she was just going into Mrs. Bishop’s. She did not turn her head or notice him. He waited till she was out of his sight; then he followed her. “I don’t care who’s there, I must see her again.” He had to bite his lips to keep from saying this aloud.

Thyra had had a hard time of it since the sailing party. When Lang had left her on a business errand that morning, it had not entered his mind to be jealous; but in the hot city he met Hawk, who had also come into town for a few hours’ attention to affairs,—meaning



nevertheless to return to Newport, as the object of his trip was still unaccomplished.

"How are you all, down on the beach?" Hawk asked. "Mrs. Lang as blooming as ever, I'm sure. I thought Sundon was getting very civil to her when I came away. I suppose Benson must be going to get up some new 'adapted French plays' this winter, and Harry is practicing. He's always professional before everything."

Hawk had no special wish to make mischief; but an idea having occurred to him in which, as far as he knew, he was the first, he was tempted to express it. The effect rather pleased him too. Lang, who already gave him credit for great knowledge of human nature, now said, with a vain attempt at coolness, "Do you know what you're talking about?"

Hawk was not moved by the rough form of the address any more than by the evident pain he had given. "Why not? What have I said to offend *you*? Of course you know you are safe; and I never offer my services to people that have no need of them. Good-morning; my respects to Mrs. Lang." And he was gone, before his slower companion could stop him.

"I wish I'd slapped his face," was Lang's first thought, looking after the street-car where Hawk had jumped aboard; but then followed another idea. "Well, do I know?"



By evening Thyra had heard in full what was on her husband's mind, to her thorough distress; but he would not stop; he was not much more discreet than she in the matter of talking. The next day it was no better; her meeting Harry on the beach was a fresh provocation. At last, Thyra, having fallen into making an unspoken series of comparisons matching her husband's denunciations of "that actor fellow," exclaimed, "I don't believe he'd say such things to any woman as you have been saying to me, anyhow."

"How dare you?" Lang made a step forward with his hand lifted, then checked himself, but too late, for her burst of tears showed him she had understood. He on his part was too much ashamed to apologize; a state of mind which does not improve the temper. When the second morning came, he insisted she should shut herself up in her own room. "I won't have you setting all the people looking at you as they did yesterday."

"That's your own fault, quarreling with me for nothing."

She really meant what she said; she alone still did not appreciate the real state of things; but this unfortunately Lang did not believe.

The day dragged on wretchedly, till by and by she said, timid and tearful, "At least you might let me go and see Grace Delahay; she's sure to be at home this afternoon."



"I don't want to go out. It's too hot to make calls."

"But you needn't come, need you?"

"Miss Delahay's a good enough friend for you; a lady, well-connected, quiet; but that vagabond cousin of hers is always bringing his pack of scamps about her; how can I tell you won't find Sundon over there?"

"Not now. Mr. Tyne and Mr. Corbin are both away, and he never goes to call on her by himself. He don't like her, and I think she don't like him either."

"Shows her good sense. Well, you may go. Come back early, that's all; I want you here at tea. Yes, Grace Delahay's the kind of woman I like you to know. I wish she were married, and could matronize you; I don't know but she does already."

Lang was so far satisfied, that he did not watch Thyra's going.

When Thyra asked for "the ladies," the servant told her that both were gone to Mrs. Waldron's, but that Miss Delahay would soon come back. "I'll wait for her," said Thyra, feeling as if to return to the hotel at once were impossible. She went into the parlor, which ran through the house from front to back; an old-fashioned low-ceiled room, dating from Colonial times, with heavy beams overhead, and a general effect of a ship's cabin. The blinds were all closed except those of one long window which was also a door, opening on Grace's favorite veranda.



Thyra sat down near it, in a low straw-chair. As soon as the servant had gone, she gave a long sigh, almost a sob, and pressed her hand to her head. She felt worn out with the life she had been leading in these last days. If her husband expected her to prefer him before all other men, he should not treat her so unkindly. Some did not, as she had told him. True, she had not to be any one else's wife; and perhaps all men were so to their wives; but if it could be different—

The door-bell rang very sharply. She started and shivered. She trembled still more, when through the door from the parlor into the hall, which stood wide open, she saw and heard Harry Sundon, asking also if the ladies were at home, proposing in his turn to wait for Miss Delahay. As he entered the parlor, he pushed away the chair which the servant had set against the door to keep it open, and it slammed behind him. "What's that?" Thyra cried, springing up.

"Only me, Mrs. Lang," he said. "There is such a draught, I thought it might be too much for you, but if you would rather, I can open the door again."

"No, it's quite right—I'm much obliged—I—" she hardly knew what she was saying. To have him come here, and just now! It was dreadful, after all Jack's talk, but—how pleasant his voice was! She had not noticed it before; voices she was slow to remark, it was her eye



that was caught first when she observed people. She sat down again by the long window; the only light in the room fell on her face. Harry saw the darkness under her eyes, and the dimmed color in her cheeks; it pleased him better just then than if she had been in brilliant looks. He put himself near her, but a little in the shadow; she could not see his features as distinctly as he hers, but she noticed how handsome his eyes seemed, the gray growing darker and the pupil dilating in the half-light, softening the whole expression of his face.

"I didn't see you this morning on the beach," he said.

"No, I had a headache."

"You don't look well, allow me to say. You must go sailing with us again; nothing like the air on the water for headaches, I assure you. Tyne and Corbin both trust me alone with the boat now. If Miss Delahay only comes back soon enough, we can try this very afternoon."

"Did she say she would?"

"I haven't seen her to-day to ask, but I think she will."

"I should so like it; it would be delightful—but I don't think I can."

She was meaning to be cautious, and vex her husband no further, Harry saw; and for a moment he himself felt an impulse to draw back as she did. To play a part with



unforeseen cues and improvised answers was interesting enough; but to-day, in spite of former ventures on dangerous ground, he was quite beyond his experience; he had too often been in company he knew to be bad, but he had brought it no recruits. Any diversion from outside might even now have changed the course of his destiny; but fate is not so fond of watching over those who let themselves drift. Another minute, and he was asking Thyra, in his softest tones, "Why not? surely it can't do you any harm, such a good sailor as you are."

"Oh, no, that's not it."

"Our company, perhaps? We are dull?"

"No; you are all so kind and so nice, it's horrid to have to give it up."

"You don't mean you never will come with us any more at all?"

"I'm afraid so."

"Are you going away?"

"No—not yet."

"I see; Mr. Lang is sulky because we didn't invite him last time. Well, he shan't be left out. I'll go over and ask him."

"Oh, no, no, don't!" She was really frightened, recalling her husband's mood when she quitted him.

Harry pretended not to notice, as he went on: "He can't be offended at being asked, whether he likes sailing



or not. And if he won't join us, that hasn't kept you away before."

"He don't want me to go any more without him."

"You are sure we can't persuade him?"

"Quite. He hates sailing."

"And rowing too?"

"Yes."

"Why? I didn't think, after letting you matronize Miss Delahay all summer, he would be such a dog-in-the-manger now. He can't be afraid for you, after we have brought you safe home so many times, can he?"

He drew his chair a little nearer hers. She moved a little farther from the window. He took up a paper-knife from a table beside him, and began to play with it.

"Take care," said she, "you'll break it."

"Oh no. But why won't Mr. Lang trust you with us?"

"I don't think he has any reason."

"What is the matter then?"

"Oh, I don't know—he's so unkind lately—he never used to be." She felt that Harry was making her say whatever he chose; yet she seemed now to be no longer able to help herself.

"He ought not to begin now. I wonder at him; who could be harsh to you? But the best of us men are stupid fellows; I dare say I have annoyed you many a time."



"No, you are always so good to me!"

She gave a great sigh, and he a sudden violent start.

"Look out!" she cried, "you'll upset that table."

"Oh confound the table! Excuse me, but to have you seem in so much trouble when—you ought to know I would do anything to get you out of it; and then to talk about tables! Don't now."

Thyra, having had experience of one lover already, could not but understand something from his look and tone. She tried to resist them.

"You can do nothing for me,—not you,—do go away."

"How can I sit here and hear you tell me that, darling?" He rose as he spoke; he dropped the paper-knife, but he did not notice that now.

"Don't!" cried foolish Thyra. "If you had any right to call me—but you know you mustn't."

"I know nothing of the kind, and here's the proof, love, and stop me if you will!" Before she knew what was coming, he bent over her, put his hands on her shoulders, and kissed her on both cheeks, on her forehead, on her lips. She did not move or speak; but he saw that for the moment she had forgotten everything but him, and was willing to forget.

Just then a little inarticulate cry sounded outside. They started apart; Thyra retreated into the room, cov-



ering her face; Harry turned to the long window, and saw Grace, white and shocked. Her foot was on the sill; she could not have been listening, or he should have noticed it; she must have come up in that last moment, and expecting to meet no one, been at once arrested by what she had not thought to see.

He was cool and on the defensive at once. "Miss Delahay, I owe you an explanation." This in a tone meant to convey: "You are misinterpreting us."

"One moment," said Grace, evidently struggling for composure too. She passed him and went to Thyra, to his surprise taking her by the hand and speaking very gently, as if to a frightened child. "Mrs. Lang, if you will go to my room and wait for me, you will not be disturbed. Mrs. Bishop may be here at any minute."

Thyra let herself be led out, not even looking up. Grace soon returned, and went out on the veranda; Harry, who had stood still where she left him, followed her. There was a small table outside with work on it; she took her place behind it, and stood looking across it at him. In the fuller light, he seemed older and harder than she had ever seen him, and his eyes were not soft now, as the pupils contracted. Defiant as his face had grown, he was plainly no more at ease than herself, in spite of their mutual efforts. She waited, but he did not open his lips; then she spoke:



“What have you to say to me? I heard your last words—I saw you—it was well you had not some other spectator.”

“You take great interest in my affairs, Miss Delahay,” he answered savagely. “Can I flatter myself you are jealous?”

He had just enough self-possession left to hope that this was the real interpretation of her steady coldness to him, and to feel that it would give him the advantage. But the words were no sooner spoken than he saw that he could not have blundered worse. If Grace had been marble before, she was white fire now; he dropped his eyes, her look was so scorching. “You!” she said, between her teeth, “you! you! and after the advantage you have taken of her coming to see me! Why have I nothing at hand that would kill you quick!”

His anger left him; he felt himself shamed before her; he knew he had insulted her beyond bearing, and that she deserved very different treatment at his hands. “Forgive me!” he said. “How should a man in my case not be beside himself? You speak of her; well, she, both of us, are in your power; what will you do with us, with her?”

“What can I do, indeed?” she said, more calmly, but still so sternly that he feared she suspected him of double-dealing. “I will not be your accomplice,



nor would I be Mr. Lang's spy; but you give me no better choice."

"Surely, between two women, and neither hard-hearted, there must be some other way."

"Not with you on the spot. All depends on you. If you really love Thyra, have some pity on her; do not disgrace her, for your mother's sake, if you remember one."

"If I do? You should have named some other name to me than that. The woman that neglected her own child from his birth, and forsook him for the sake of a lawless love—there's a recollection to appeal to now! If I am my mother's son, why then, for all I hate the thought of her, it's natural enough I should follow her way. That's not what *you* mean to ask of me!"

He expected to see Grace flash into fresh anger, as his own excitement paused enough to let him reflect. Instead, her voice had a pitying tone at first, though it hardened as she went on. "That helps to explain you then; I have been prepared for what you are, ever since your speech of the other day, and now I see why you are so. Your place is to be Mr. Hawk's companion; he will not find himself alone in his circle."

"The other day? I declare I was only teasing you then. I didn't expect myself that matters would ever



go on so far as they have now. And what do you know of Hawk, that you class me with him?"

"He used to say such things too, to tease me too, I suppose. And I think my cousin Mont knows more of him, that he would not tell and I would not hear."

"Well, leaving out details, what does Mont say of Hawk on the whole? Dan is no friend of mine, any more than of his."

"He called him 'a thorough scoundrel, a man without a heart, false to the core,' only three days past."

"Does Mont call me so? Am I so? Think over what Mont says of me, look me in the face, and tell me if I deserve all that."

She did look at him, so long and searchingly that he could hardly bear it; but under his pleading gaze, her own softened a little. She remembered now that when she had first met Hawk, she had once turned and looked so into his eyes, as he sat talking to her; she wanted then to feel the reason of the repulsion towards him which had seized on her from the beginning, she not having evidence against him at the moment which could make it clear to herself. Those eyes had shown no shrinking from her inspection; how should they, when they were so shallow? One seemed to come up against a blank wall there; for all the man's personal beauty, they were unbeautiful; for all his intelligence, empty; no vi-



ality in them, no soul behind them. On the contrary Harry's were deep and full of life; half-a-dozen different feelings were trying now to find expression in them; nothing was clear in his mind, and every emotion so strong, that no single one could give first place to any other.

"No," Grace said slowly; "Mont must be right; you were not worthless after all. But what does that help now? When you have gone so far as you have to-day, how shall any one move you to take a step back?"

Harry was surprised at her despairing tone; he had expected a cool moral lecture from a very distant plane, and this comprehension of the force of the situation touched him somehow.

"If Thyra only says the word, the whole thing can be at an end," he said. "There's no great harm done yet, I assure you; believe me! Only let her send me away."

Grace bit her lips, tried to keep silent, had to speak. "Do you know her no better than that? She never will, she cannot. She is not bad of herself, but you have mastered her entirely."

Unconsciously his face brightened.

"Oh, how can you!" cried Grace, reading his look. "Think what this is to come to. You know she can keep nothing to herself; her husband will find her out, and next the whole world, and then—"

"Well?"



"I thought love meant two people should make each other happy, or else one give up happiness that the other should be more secure. You only bring wretchedness where there was peace before; and if this goes on, ruin; and after, such men as you think yourselves free to forsake a woman—it's horribly unfair!"

Was this Grace, with the tear-filled eyes and quick, passionate, uncertain utterance?

"You think too hardly of me, on my word you do!" Harry answered. "If Thyra were really mine, I would never throw her off, I would never even let her go."

"But since she is not, it is not forsaking her to leave her."

"You think I ought to?"

"Yes, and now, and at once."

"I can't do it."

"Then what becomes of her? I cannot say it again."

"You might as well ask me to cut my own throat as to go. She loves me."

"I would rather die than harm anything I loved."

"I declare, I believe you mean what you say. Well—tell me just what you want me to do."

"To leave this place at once, and keep away from it while she is here; to avoid meeting her, seeing her, hearing of her, as long as her husband lives; and not to think of any way to shorten his life."



"You ask a great deal; you've no idea how much!"

"An easy thing is not worth asking of a man of honor."

"Do you think I'll do it?"

"I cannot tell."

"You don't say 'forget her.'"

"No; I know some things are impossible all at once. But what I tell you is not impossible, only very hard."

"You shall not say it was too hard for me. I will go."

Her face lighted up, and she put out her hand to him.

"I bid you good-speed."

"Only just let me see her first. One minute."

Her face darkened. "If you do you will stay. I promise you to be gentle to her; but you must not see her."

"All or nothing! Nothing then. Good-bye. If it were not for you, I could not have done this. When you see Mont, tell him so, and he'll excuse me for leaving the house without a care-taker. But be kind to Thyra."

"Believe me, I will."

"Good-bye."

Grace watched him till he was out of sight, then went upstairs. Thyra lay on the bed with her face in the pillow; she sprang up as Grace entered, and cried out, "Have you sent him away?"



“Yes.”

“Oh how could you?”

“How could I not?”

“I don’t know what I shall do. I can’t live without him, and I mustn’t have him anywhere near me, and I can’t die.”

“She is the greatest fool I ever saw,” thought Grace; but she said very gently, stroking Thyra’s hair, “You acknowledge you must have parted, and it is over now.”

“He won’t come back! He left no word for me!”

“You know he ought not to have.”

“What shall I do? I’m left all alone.”

“You alone?” Grace could hardly keep her voice from sounding bitter, thinking of her own loveless-seeming lot.

“Not you; you have your mother and your husband.”

“My mother! You don’t know her. She’s coming on to-morrow, and I wish she would stay away; she’s so religious, she never likes anybody to have a bit of fun even. And Jack will tell her all he thinks,—he’s guessed everything,—and I shall get nothing but lectures and scoldings. He that used to be so kind! Now he says, if I don’t behave better, he’ll send me home with her when she goes, and he won’t have anything more to do with me; and then I shall die.”

“He cannot mean that in earnest; surely you can make him forgive you, if you try. I am sure he really loves



you better than any one else can, and for the sake of that—”

“Oh, don’t! I must be a wicked woman, but—” Thyra’s voice failed her; she began to sob inarticulately, and shed floods of tears. Grace could quiet her more easily, now she ceased lamenting in words; still it was a long time before she was fit to go back to the hotel. Left to herself, Grace was but little calmer. The shock of coming face to face with such passions was terrible to her; the firm world she had thought she knew seemed to quiver and break under her feet. She was not sure whether she could believe Harry, in spite of his declarations; a saying of Tyne’s concerning him, “It’s a pity he is so much a man of impulse,” rang in her ears. In those first moments, she was ready to distrust any one; even her faith in Felix was disturbed. Not till the morrow did she recover herself, when she learned Harry had really gone at once, starting for Maine to join Goring.

That personage was for the moment astonished when Harry walked into his quarters, saying, “Have you any room, old fellow? I’ve come to stay if you have.” Still nothing in the way of pleasing one’s self surprised the banker long. “Devilish glad to see you, Harry. I’m just left all alone; Blood and Stout went off this morning; but I’m not ready to fry myself down town again yet. What’s all this talk about California? There was a long-



ish paragraph in the last *Herald* I had. Is Benson broke? I know he lost money in the spring, in spite of you."

"Not so bad as that; but he thinks a new audience would be good for us."

"When are you off?"

"I don't know yet; but he's given me time enough to see how you're getting on."

"I wish you'd brought Monty Tyne too. But now, Harry, how could you leave Mrs. Lang? Hawk wrote me you were having it all your own way in that quarter. He always tops off his business letters with some news, and—"

"A very wise question for you, when you see me here. Do I go where I don't like in vacation, my dear fellow? Dan's head is always running on the petticoats; I'm bored to death with him, I want to hear something else. What luck did you have to-day? tell ahead."



## CHAPTER VIII.

TYNE found himself kept in Chicago for ten days by Mrs. Bishop's affairs and his own; both were in a sufficiently involved condition to annoy him a good deal at first; the more that notwithstanding he told himself, "You could do little enough if you were there," he was anxious to return to Long Island.

After a while he had news from his friends which seemed to contradict his forebodings. Grace's hoped-for chance of something to do had come to her at last. She wrote that she had accepted the place of governess to the little daughter of her own father's trusted friend, Major Romaine, of the regular army. The Major was at Fort Hamilton now, having just returned from a short foreign trip with his family; though he would probably be ordered to some far Western post before long. This last information did not please Tyne, who knew nothing of the West beyond Chicago, and had distrustful views as to its distant regions. "Still with the Major and his wife, she can't be badly treated," he summed up.



There had also been a letter from Harry, with the full history of Benson's plans, which, if they were successful, would take the company as far as Australia. It ended:

"Now don't plague yourself any longer with thinking me a doubtful admirer of a woman you can't bear. We shall not quarrel for that, since the whole thing is over and done with, and no one the worse. I'll tell you more when we meet, if you care to know; and all considered, it's best you should. I hope we shall part friends,—but on my word I shall be sorry to part at all, believe me."

"I ought to be content with that, for the present at least," thought Tyne.

By degrees his business grew easier to settle, till almost before he knew it everything was done. Still he was impatient to be off; Harry had written again, only a few lines, but saying he should be at the *Blanche Hotel* in New York by the time when Tyne expected to come back.

Arriving in town one bright morning, Tyne went at once to the *Blanche*, where he had engaged a room, meaning to be in town while Harry was. On inquiring for his friend, the clerk answered, to his surprise, "Mr. Sundon hasn't been near here, sir," in a tone which implied, "And you might have known better than to expect him;" while two bystanders, one of whom was unfolding some newspaper more well-known than well



thought of, gave each other a sly look. "But there's a letter for you," added the clerk, bringing out one addressed in Harry's hand; a yellow envelope without even a postmark, the stamp being cancelled by two pen-strokes, after the fashion of small up-country post-offices. Harry was not over-fanciful about stationary, but such an informal-looking missive as this that the clerk seemed trying to read by clairvoyance while he slowly let it pass from his hands to those which had the right to open it, had not been written in town. "Delayed in coming from Maine, that's all," Tyne thought; still the curiosity of the people about him suggested he knew not what of unpleasant. He went to his room to solve the puzzle unobserved; but before he had time to look into the letter, there was a knock at his door, and Corbin entered, in an unusually melancholy and discomposed state.

"Goring said you might be here," he began, "and I came to say I'm not going back to our house. It don't make any difference, I suppose; our time's nearly up, isn't it? but I thought it was more civil to tell you myself, and—" He stopped, as if he had something more to add that he found it hard to speak of.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Tyne. "Anything I can help you about?"

"Nobody can help, and everything's the matter. You may as well know it. I tried to write, and I couldn't;



I came back, and spoke for myself,—and your cousin wouldn't have me. She was very kind—but it's no use."

"I was afraid you hadn't much chance; but I'm very sorry, indeed I am."

"It must be you she cares for; such a wonderful girl can't but love somebody; and it can't be Sundon; if it was, I swear I'd shoot him."

"Come now! he has as good a right as I, or any one—"

"Good God! You don't know what he's been about then."

"What are you saying?"

"Why, he's gone off with Mrs. Lang."

"That's not true! That's a damned lie! Who told you that? I know you would never make up such a story."

"Goring says so, and Hawk, and Lang himself, and her own mother, and everybody."

"It's impossible. Why, Sundon wrote me there was nothing between them— To be sure that was a week ago—"

Tyne tore open the letter he had just been given, and read (not aloud), in Harry's own writing:

"DEAR MONT,—I have to take back what I wrote you last week; Thyra Lang is with me now. I can understand too well what your cousin must think; but she is wrong; I intended nothing of the kind up to the moment I came back to town. If you don't want to show that you believe me a liar, come down and let me speak for myself."



There was more, but Tyne could not read on; the letter fell from his hand. "What your cousin must think!" there was a blow indeed. "Charley," he said, "your news is too true."

Corbin looked more disturbed than ever; was Grace concerned, after all, that Tyne should be so excited?

"I wish it was a lie," he said, "but you see yourself. Everybody is talking about it; raking up what he said one day, and she said another; how he used to hold her hand when he helped her out of the boat,—you know that time we had been across to Neversink, and Hawk came down to the dock to see us in, just before he went to Newport? I never would have thought of anything then—"

"Nor anybody else."

"But Hawk makes a regular story of it, I can tell you. Then how she and her husband quarreled the last days, how wretched she looked when she left Start's, and I don't remember what all."

"Don't tell me what they say; tell me what you know."

"That'll be only second hand, as it is. Day-before yesterday evening I got back from up river, and the first thing I saw was Goring walking on the beach smoking. 'What's the news with you, youngster?' he calls out. 'Nothing,' said I; 'and you?' 'Oh, plenty! we've finished up our summer with a sensation, we



have.' Then he let his cigar go out, and gave me his story. It seems Sundon and he had come down from Maine together; the weather turned so bad, Goring said, they got sick of living under Niagara. Well, it's a troublesome journey, connections hard to make; still they got into town about noon, and were meaning to lunch somewhere before Goring went to our house; for Sundon said he must stay in New York. They weren't five steps out of the station though before Sundon said he'd left his cigar-case in the cars, the one you gave him, and he was going in again to look for it. So Goring walked on, but Sundon didn't catch up; after a while he turned and went back for him, all the way to the station at last; but Sundon wasn't there either, and Goring's never seen him since. Instead there was a little old lady asking all the world what had become of her daughter. The two ladies were going by some northward-bound train that there was a rush for, and a great crowd in the doorway. The old lady had pushed through and thought the other was following her close, till she got fairly into the cars, when she looked round, and nobody there. She hunted all through the train till it left, thinking her daughter was in some other car; but as she couldn't find her, she let the train go off, and began searching round the station; when Goring happened on her, she was talking to the station-master.



‘Was she a little girl, did you say, ma’am?’ he said. ‘Oh, gracious, no, a woman grown;’ and she described her; Mrs. Lang, to an eyelash. The railroad people had had their own business to mind, and had seen nothing; but while they were promising to do all they could, Goring blurts out,—you know his way when anything happens of a sudden, how it stampedes him sometimes,—‘Good Lord, then that’s what Sundon left me alone for!’”

“So friendly of him, to let the whole world know that something was wrong.”

“I think Goring was rather sorry he spoke, for at that the old lady turned right on him, like a wild-cat, he said, and she cried out, ‘Mr. Sundon! what do you know about Mr. Sundon?’ ‘Only that I expected to find him here, and I don’t.’ At that she looked ready to faint, but she gave herself a kind of shake, and stiffened up like a frozen thing. She walked to the telegraph window, and sent off a message; then out of the station. Across the street there was a man that keeps an apple-stand, touching up his stock with a feather-duster in the intervals of trade. She stopped and looked at him till he asked her if she wanted anything. ‘Did you see such a gentleman and lady pass by five or ten minutes ago?’

“‘Yes, ma’am; they took a hack and drove off, going up town, I think.’ Then she went one way, and Goring



nother, for he didn't want to be asked any more questions. But when he got to his own train he saw her two seats in front of him. She never came near him again, though."

"That's all?"

"Not quite. He began to make a joke of the affair, and say how deep Sundon had been, how he'd bluffed him off every time he asked a question when they were up there in Maine, and how cleverly it must have been planned from the first, only at the end rather too quick work. Then I got mad, and told him Sundon wasn't that kind of man at all, that he might lose his head and go wrong, but he wouldn't lay traps weeks and months beforehand."

"Good for you."

"Then Goring laughed and told me I was 'the freshest he ever saw'; so I found it was no use talking, and I went off to see your cousin, and get the taste of the thing out of my mouth. As I was let in, the little old lady came out; and Miss Delahay looked as if she'd been crying. And then I must go and bother her!"

"Oh, never mind that. But what could have brought Mrs. Lang's mother to Start's again?"

"I suppose she was a stranger to New York, and didn't know where to go. But what Lang came back for is plain enough; he's getting his witnesses and his counsel.



You'll hear nothing else all over the beach, or in our house. Hawk came yesterday morning, and he and Goring are running each other about 'our case' all the time;—well, I may be as 'fresh' as they choose, but I don't see now where the laugh comes in."

"Nor I."

"I suppose they're on Lang's side, in their own way; and I know everybody else is. Of course Lang's got the right of it, too. Still I don't like a man that's ready to roast a woman over a slow fire when he catches her; no matter what, I don't. And he'll do what comes to the same thing; he's engaged Hawk as his lawyer."

"The devil he has! You've heard Dan in court? It's worse than vitriol-throwing."

"That's so. And Sundon was such a capital fellow—But why couldn't he let that woman alone? And Hawk said to me, 'You'll testify for us, my boy; you were on those sailing parties.' I daren't refuse, for that would look worse than anything; and thank goodness, he can't get much out of me, for I don't know a thing but what I've been told. Only they mean to have lots of witnesses and no end of row."

"Yes; Hawk wants his turn to thrill an audience; he means to bring down the house too; and he takes such an appropriate part, as avenger of society!"

"It does seem out of keeping; I never heard his



match for fast-and-loose talk;—yet what has he ever done, though?”

“Enough, I dare say.”

“But the worst is, he drawled out this morning, just as I was leaving, ‘Miss Delahay’s evidence will be just what we want.’”

“He shan’t have it!”

“Can you stop him?”

“I rather think so.”

“I’d thank you for that, I would! As for me, when he’s ready, he may send after me.”

“Where are you going?”

“I don’t know. Goring says I may take another ten days, if I like;—he’s guessed about your cousin, and he means to be kind, but I wish he’d let me alone!—but I can’t tell where to go.”

“Where are your mother and sisters this summer?”

“Up in Catskill, at a dead-and-alive boarding house; I couldn’t stand that.”

“Why should you, or they either? Can’t you afford to give them a lark?”

“Of course I can; but mother’s so quiet.”

“She’ll like it for your sisters’ sake; and she knows they ought to be properly matronized, and not run wild. Your party will do you credit too; your ladies are all pretty.”

“You really think they look—well—stylish?”



“They couldn’t be more presentable, my dear fellow.”

“You have such ideas! Well, I’ll do it; and now I won’t be bothering you any more.”

Left to himself, Tyne took up Harry’s letter, and read on:

“It’s too long a story to write. I’ll explain when I see you. I must ask you to help me out a bit, on Thyra’s account; if I make the least move, it may give the other side a chance to get at her, and I can’t have her meddled with, nor is Lang a man for half-measures. I prefer to show no fight, and make as quiet a settlement as possible; but we want a divorce, and we mean to have it. If you can tell Lang that, so much the better; I rather think he is of the same mind. We are at the old Craft house, that you showed me the way to last year; the caretakers are boarding us—*incog.* of course. If you can’t come yourself, report the enemy’s moves by letter, that’s a good fellow. I never meant to humbug you, or your cousin; the whole thing has been a chapter of accidents. Yours, H. S.”

“Now, is that all true?” thought Tyne. “Well, to work! I’ll find out what I can to-day, and see him to-morrow,—and quarrel with him for good and all, very likely! It may very likely be best for Grace if I do what he asks; but on my soul, if it wasn’t for that, I’d leave him to himself for daring to bring her name into such a business!”

The journey to Long Island seemed endless. At last he found himself at Mrs. Bishop’s door. He walked in



unannounced, and discovered that lady and Lang in earnest conversation.

“That’s just it, ma’am,” Lang was saying. “I should think Miss Delahay might be willing to appear on my side.”

“My niece in a divorce case! I won’t hear of it. Besides, what can she know about it? Monteith, is that you? Tell Mr. Lang it’s not to be thought of, that he should come here for witnesses.”

“Why not, ma’am? Why not, Mr. Tyne? Miss Delahay was a trifle in my wife’s confidence, if I’m not mistaken.”

“How dare you insinuate any such thing?” cried Mrs. Bishop.

“If you mean to say my cousin was a party to the affair—” began Tyne, fiercely.

“Nothing of the sort!” interrupted Lang, in the same tone. “Can’t you see I know better? Of course she was given to understand either that there was nothing, or that it was all over; she’s been working for me, and thought she did some good; and though it was no use, I thank her for it; but all the same, since she’s been made a blind of, I should think she’d jump at the chance of showing it was against her will. I’m sure they’ve treated her badly enough. Is she in the house, Mrs. Bishop?”



“No, and you shouldn’t see her if she was. You may go and ask the servant-girls what they spied out; they are very clever at watching what happens beyond the kitchen; but if you were a gentleman, you would not think for a moment of entangling her in such an affair.”

“Aunt,” said Tyne, “a blunder is not a crime in Mr. Lang’s circumstances; why should you insult him so?”

“My niece knows,” Mrs. Bishop continued, “that a lady takes no notice when anything improper is going on; even if, young as Grace is, she can suspect such conduct. I will not have her disturbed.”

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Bishop; but I’ve engaged a lawyer, and of course I must follow his advice. He told me she would be a valuable witness. I thought though it would be more civil to see her or you myself than to send him over, or surprise her with a subpoena.”

“Monteith,” said Mrs. Bishop, “do you talk to this person; you know him, and it is not a proper business for a lady.”

With that she stalked out of the room, in all the dignity of her height; she was within an inch of six feet, and neither age nor care had made her stoop yet.

“Yes, that’s better,” said Lang; “it’s embarrassing to her of course; but she’s mighty touchy, if she is your aunt.”



"Only couldn't you leave my cousin in peace? You must have other witnesses enough. Who is this lawyer of yours?"

"Hawk. He gave me the first hint anything was going wrong; and you know how smart he is—"

"And how cruel. Are you really going to put your wife at the mercy of his tongue?"

"Why not? What has she done to me? And what has Sundon done to me? Of course you don't see it so; Hawk says you're tarred with the same brush."

"Oh, does he?"

"I suppose you think there's nothing out of the common against your friend, or that she had a right to throw me over if a more fascinating fellow came along—"

"If I did, I would have showed you the door before this. I don't deny Sundon has wronged you; and I imagine you've been quite as agreeable a husband as Madam Thyra deserves; but for all that I advise you to make a peaceable settlement of the matter; it can be arranged quietly, if you choose, I'm sure."

"Do they?"

"Yes."

"Then I don't. I'll make them pay for it, damn them! First I meant to shoot them both; no jury would hang me for that; then I saw it would disgrace them more to show them up to the public."



“They’ve been imprudent enough to give you the chance?”

“Perfectly brazen. They’ve nothing to plead. We can prove that your friend has been attentive to my wife all summer; that she confessed her preference for him; that the last any one saw of them was in each other’s company; and that the moment before he had made an excuse to return to the place where she was to be found; as if they had an understanding.”

“They had not.”

“And now they are in hiding, no one knows where,—unless you.”

“And it’s you, is it, that tells me all this?”

“Why not? I’d tell the whole world if I could get it together.”

“You run the chance of making yourself a public laughing-stock, if you proclaim your case so openly.”

“All very well for you to think so; but no decent man will find my affair ridiculous, I’ll tell you that. Such treachery is no joke on this side the water. A woman that I’ve done everything for—I have a right to punish her if she plays me false. I mean to have a complete and open divorce, and to let the whole world know what she is; I’ll be free of her for ever, and it shan’t be easy for her in the doing; I don’t care if you think me a fool or a savage.”



“I never saw the woman less worth losing one’s head for, if that’s any pleasure for you to hear; but I pity her in Hawk’s hands; and I can’t have my cousin brought into the matter, still less if he conducts it; why couldn’t you have had some other lawyer, at least?”

“Is he really so hard a man? But how can I change now? It’s all settled; I can’t; no more than I can have my wife back again. Will he say more than is fair, do you think?”

“I know him.”

“She’s a woman, after all; and there was a time—but what should I tell you that for? you wouldn’t understand.”

“Why not, as well as Hawk?”

“Oh, he don’t either. He’s a man of business, straight through. I wish I was.”

“All the better if you’re not.”

“You think so? I wonder if— Look here; she did love me once, I’ll swear she did; what’s changed her? There wasn’t a sweeter or a better girl this side the Pacific the day she married me; no, nor for years after; not till we came here. She can’t have changed of herself— I’ve been too hard on her, maybe. She’s never been the same since we lost those children; it upset her so— The truth of it is, I think she’s going mad; there’s insanity somewhere in the family, I believe. I ought to have seen



that. It's too late now; to try and get her in an asylum would be only making things worse, since they're where they are; but if that's so, your way, of settling up the case quietly, would be best; only I couldn't get Hawk to see that, I suppose."

"Let me try. I think I could manage, without his even knowing you had had a word to say."

"Do. Do what you choose. I'll trust you to get it right. And tell your ladies they've nothing to be afraid of; here's my hand on that; and, on my word, I don't care what Hawk says of you, I'm sure you're an honester man than he is."

It flashed through Tyne's mind how contemptuously he had spoken of Lang to Harry once; and he felt very weary of himself, in this world where words cannot be unsaid or deeds undone.



## CHAPTER IX.

TYNE found Hawk and Goring fishing on the dock; they had not caught much, but were laughing loud together.

“Hallo, Mont!” Goring hailed him; “have you heard our news?”

“Everything except what luck Hawk had at Newport,” Tyne answered, coming close. “There’s a spiteful little rumor that Miss Emma wouldn’t change her mind; but it was only Sam Longbow,—‘Divide-by-three Sam,’—told me.”

“Well, this once it’s true,” said Hawk; “but so much the better for me; she and her money have gone off since spring. She looks like a chills-and-fever patient, and the family bank account is next to overdrawn.”

“Stuff!” Goring put in. “You can’t fool Mont with any sour grapes, don’t you know? The Minots are as solid as a rock; but Emma’s going to marry a navy man.”

“Yes,” said Hawk, “an ugly little fortune-hunting monkey of a lieutenant-commander. They’ll find each



has taken the other in, anyway;" a prophecy which proved entirely false.

"Dan must make his million in his own line," said Goring. "This case of Lang's ought to give you a pretty good lift, my boy; whoever pays the costs, at least you'll do yourself credit. I'm a little sorry though it's Sundon you're going to turn inside out; you skin a poor devil pretty clean, once you set to work; and he's such a good fellow when he isn't spoiling for a fight!"

"We never were great friends, and all's fair for one's own side," Hawk answered carelessly.

"After all," said Goring, "the trial will be a capital advertisement for Harry."

"Sundon never does his own advertising," Tyne replied; "that's in Benson's part of the contract."

"Well, but what do you want, Mont?" said Hawk. "I know you're not here for nothing. I can tell you half of it to begin with, I believe; if you've set your heart on that cousin of yours,—she's a pretty creature, after all, and you can afford a love-match without making a fool of yourself,—you'll please her by dropping Sundon. I met her yesterday, and tried her with a word on the subject; and if she wasn't fierce! 'Too false to speak of and too bad to think of,' she said. What a witness she'll make, yes, and you too!"



"You hold your tongue about her, and come with me," answered Tyne. "I'd like to consult you, particularly."

"Tell us your joke afterwards, if he'll let you, Dan," Goring called after them. He had to wait longer than he expected before Hawk returned, which he did alone, and, in spite of himself, with an air that made Goring say, "Hallo? what has Mont done to you? This is the first time I ever saw you with your comb cut, fighting-cock as you are."

"What should he do? But I must go and talk to Lang; I've no time to waste here."

"Well, but will you get Mont into your show?"

"There'll be no show. The thing's to be patched up before a judge in chambers, and you and the newspaper reporters may just go farther if you want any excitement."

"Mont's a spoilsport. Where's he gone to now?"

"To see his aunt, like a good boy."

"Mighty queer he should be so attentive to her, when he's got the money. But that's the trouble with him; he's not like other people, and you never know beforehand what he'll do. To be sure, the pretty cousin—Hi! I'm talking to the air. Hawk might have said he was gone."

Tyne meanwhile had returned to Mrs. Bishop.

"What have you settled?" she asked.



“We shall have it our own way, I think. Where’s Grace?”

“At the Romaines’. Mrs. Romaine came for her this morning, and she is to spend the night. Do you want to see her?”

“Not just now. Don’t let her be worried. I will come again, when everything is arranged,—to-morrow or next day,—and tell her all myself.”

“Don’t do anything imprudent, Monteith; we mustn’t make talk.”

“Not I.”

That evening, Tyne received in New York a telegram from Hawk, in one word, “Agreed.” With it came also a thick letter, bearing a foreign stamp; for hours he sat reading over and considering this, and it was far into the night before he rested from his new study. Notwithstanding, he rose betimes, and left town early next morning, by a railroad which before long brought him to a little junction in a New Jersey clearing. Instead of waiting two hours for the connection train, which after all would not have taken him direct to his destination, he struck off at once on foot through the thick woods, trusting to a memory which he soon found did not fail him. Harry and he—to what purpose they had not foreseen—had amused themselves by exploring this country the summer before; and every nook of it seemed familiar to



him yet. He met no one on the lonely roads but an occasional countryman in a wagon, who always offered a lift and was greatly surprised at its being declined. That region, now full of hotels and summer boarders, was then almost unknown; the great overflow-tide from New York had not begun to break upon it.

The day was superb; bright as June, fresh as October, the air cleared by the influence of a sea-storm, which however had not come to shore in rain. It was a pleasure to be walking through woods and fields, except for his errand and the thoughts which that raised up to accompany him. He was thrown back by them afresh into his own history, always a torment to him. It was no use to tell himself that he had been deceived too, that no one lived to accuse him or to make claims on him (the countess was now dead), that the world had forgotten the affair; he could not forget, because he could not forgive himself. The worse he thought of the countess, the worse it was that he should have been a sharer in all her treacheries except the last; and he was not so sure now that without him she would have entered on her path, still less that she had been the first of them both to set foot in it. There was no denying that he had laid his own burden on himself; and he found no way of getting free from it any more.

Then his friend! Harry had at least taken a more



open course, broken short with deceptions; but the case was the same after all, and had begun too ill to come to good. To put himself on a level with such fellows as Goring and his set, whom nobody could trust, not even one another,—Goring's very financial standing was only good because it was a matter of self-preservation with him, and if he had been the founder of the banking-house instead of merely succeeding his father in it, his credit might have suffered—and for the sake of a silly, worthless woman—that she should turn a man false who had been fair-dealing and frank above others! Then besides— But here Tyne determined not to judge till he knew.

The sun was past noon when he came out of a wood of oaks, with holly for underbrush along the faint cart-track; this led to a grove of cedars, some spreading as the sassafras, already autumn-touched, which crowded in and disputed the ground with them, others tall and spiry as Italian cypresses. It was but a narrow and thin belt, after all, letting in the sky to reflect itself in tiny pools that united to send a brook trickling beachward. In a few moments, Tyne saw the long dark-blue line of the Atlantic horizon between the stems; a step farther, and he was out of the trees, in a little grassy space, just across which a broken fence inclosed a weedy plot of land, where stood the house whither he was bound.

An old sea-captain, who had made money and retired,



had built this dwelling years before; it was deserted, for after his death his heirs had preferred to live in less solitary places. Since that time, it has been burnt down; but then it was as Captain Craft had left it: large, spreading, with rooms each side the front door; of few stories, with a shingled roof sloping up to a square lookout on top; a broad veranda, rather high from the ground, ran all round it below. Placed just on the edge of the beach, it looked like a stranded ship which some great storm might yet float off. All the front blinds were tightly closed, and the only sign of life was a thin thread of smoke from the kitchen chimney.

Tyne found the front door ajar when he had mounted the steps. He pushed it open softly, and stood in a large empty hall, narrowed a little on one side by the stairs, and running through the house. The back door was wide open, and he saw framed in it the heaving sea and the foam-flashes on the breakers; the rolling surf, and his own footsteps on the bare boards, were the only sounds he heard. He reached the farther door without meeting a creature; but the moment his foot touched the sill, Harry Sundon, sitting smoking outside on the veranda, rose up and confronted him, with an anxious, listening look, which changed at once to one of such entire satisfaction that Tyne, thinking of Grace, had hard work not to start back.



“Mont, I didn’t expect you. I was just thinking I should have to tramp over to the village and see if you’d written; the old man’s horse is worse than anybody’s legs, and for all that the post-office is a longish pull to get at. When did you leave town?— So early? You look half-starved. We’ve had our dinner, but I think there’s something left in the house.”

He went indoors, and returned in a few minutes, in company with a dried-up and not over-intelligent-looking old woman, who set out a small table on the veranda with cold meat and hot potatoes, stared curiously at Tyne, and departed again.

“There now, that’s the best I can do,” said Harry. “We won’t talk business till you’ve finished. I’m not sure,” dropping his voice, “but the old people mightn’t hear more than was good for them through the cracks of the doors and between the boards; so we’ll have our consultation on the top of the house by and by.”

“What do you tell them you are here for?”

“I? nothing; only asked for shelter and paid in advance; they are not so clever but what I could parry their questions, and they were afraid to lose their lodgers if they asked too many. I believe though they take us to be either counterfeiters or insane; anyhow they let us alone and don’t talk. They don’t remember me because they’re not the same people who were here before; those



are dead, I believe. We aren't troubled with society; the sea is the only neighbor,—no bad third on a fine day."

He looked waterwards as he spoke; Tyne's eyes followed his. The steps of the veranda on this side led down to a short board walk, ending at a gate between two tumble-down little shanties, a boathouse and a bathing-house, that watched the long gray beach meet patiently the whole force of the open ocean, three mighty mingling lines of breaker. Clear and still as the air was, the waves, bringing news of the fiercer weather that had raged far out, came heaving and crashing in, towering higher, it seemed, than the house that one hardly believed beyond their grasp; they sank into sheets of foam behind one another; they rose up again out of those white valleys, in blue-green walls made translucent by the sun; they curled over, broke, fell with a great roar on the sand, then slid back softly hissing in creamy films, to re-form their heavy ranks and break again. Nothing else; not a sail flecking the pale pure blue of the horizon-line; not a keel to cut the waters that purpled under the shadows of the few long drifting clouds. Tyne felt the simple splendor of the day to be sadly out of keeping with his errand: Harry only said,

"I declare, I can hardly hear you for the surf; it's regular artillery practice."



“I didn’t say anything. Shall we go upstairs? I’ve had dinner enough.”

The house looked still more bare and desolate within than without; the only sign of life was one that Tyne was disposed to take amiss. As they passed through a long upper hall, a door opened, and as if startled by their footsteps Thyra peeped timidly out; but when she saw who it was, she smiled, and shut the door again. “Confound her, how can she show now?” Tyne thought.

By a steep narrow stairs,—not an easy climb for the old captain if he grew fat in his later years,—they came into the lookout, open, railed about, and roofed over.

“A famous place this in Craft’s day,” said Harry; “he must have seen every vessel that crossed or coasted. It’s not always so empty out there as it is now; sometimes there’s a regular fleet of all kinds, sail and steam, and I wish the old fellow’s spyglass had gone with the house, not been carried away with him. Take the other chair; that’s the rickety one; none of the furniture is very steady on its pins, anyhow. We must talk business, I suppose, though I feel anything but ready; I’ve been so well out of the world these last days!”

“Harry, I do believe—”

“Well?” Tyne had stopped short, looking not only grave, but hurt. “I thought, since you came, you had no quarrel with me, or you’d have staid away— Oh I



know; you have your own misfortunes on your mind, and you don't want to see me in the same boat. But, my dear fellow, there's no danger. I'm perfectly safe; Thyra can't deceive anybody, not even herself; and she's entirely devoted to me."

"It's not that I was thinking of."

"What then? Out with it."

"No. It's not my place. I thought once you were more of a man than myself, not only such another; but since things are so, what right have I to be talking?"

"I don't believe you understand exactly. Tell me just what you mean, and let me set you right. That's what one friend ought to do for another. You'll never make me a sermon, I know; and I promise not to lose my temper, no matter what you fancied."

"Well then, if you want to hear me, you shall. What do you expect to do for the rest of your life? I understand Thyra well enough; and I know she will never be false to you. But you will get tired of her; she's only a child in her nature and intelligence, while you are full-grown; and she'll never develop into a companion for you."

"Oh, you don't know her. Besides, one can't find everything in any one person; why need she be clever, when she's charming already?"

"But when you come to find nothing in her, what



then? She will still cling to you,—and one day it may be the hardest work of your life to be kind to the woman that you are mad for now, that you've stolen away and made false, played a shabby trick to win—”

“Mont, that's too much!”

“I told you I should go too far, once I began.”

“Well, what next? I can't go back now, if I would.”

“No, it's too late. You must keep what you have.”

“No need for you to tell me that—to be sure, I asked you. Well?”

“I can't believe you mean to desert her in the end, she's such a helpless thing; she never would have gone wrong but for you, and you owe her everything you can give her, for you have made her lose everything she had before—”

“Desert her! That I don't. Nobody could that know what she was. You'll change your mind about her yet; and as for me, I mean to marry her as soon as Lang gives her the chance. I've committed myself to that, both by word, and in writing; not that there was any need of it, but it happened so. If you want more proof than my word, ask your cousin Grace for my letter to her.”

“You wrote her one about this?”

“I did; it wasn't easy, with Thyra looking over my shoulder, and it was an impudent thing, I'm afraid, though I assure you I didn't begin it with ‘circumstances



over which I had no control;’ still there were reasons why it had to be written, as I mean to tell you, for I see you don’t know, and you ought to.”

“Poor Grace! Why have you brought her into this? How could you? She too—I ought to have kept you two apart; I shall never forgive myself!”

“Good God! Mont, you are all wrong. Do you really imagine I have been flirting with your cousin, and touched her heart?”

“I hoped she might touch yours.”

“You thought of that as a possible match?”

“On my word, I did, ever since I saw you first together.”

“You are not an aristocrat, after all. I’m sorry to pull down your castle in the air; but set your heart at rest; she and I never pleased each other. I found nothing in her of what I do in you.”

“I only wish you had. I thought I knew you, and I believed that you could make her happy if you cared to. I knew her, and saw she was a woman who would last, and only be more thoroughly lovable as time went on; like her mother when her hair grew gray. You two I really trusted, and could have trusted you with each other. She was afraid of you, to be sure; but I thought you would win her over, and find it no less worth the doing because it would have been easy. Instead, you



must throw yourself away on a woman not worth taking, even if you could have had her honestly—”

“I tell you, you are wrong there, and altogether.”

“Well, I’ll say no more about Thyra now and for ever; but Grace?”

“She never could have loved me; we were too different; and she must worse than hate me now. I deserve it partly; I have broken my word to her, and I am afraid she thinks I never meant to keep it. I’ve been insolent and unsteady; but I haven’t been intentionally false, and we never have been lovers. Since she has told you nothing, I will; and you may blame me as much as you like.”

Tyne listened anxiously, while Harry, with growing embarrassment, unfolded his story. At the point where the question of Grace’s possible jealousy was raised, the listener sprang to his feet with an oath.

“You dared to say that? I swear I’ll throw you off the roof into the sea when you get done.”

“Once Thyra is taken care of, you may call me to account any way you please,” answered Harry, steadily.

“I know I couldn’t have done worse; I behaved like a beast, and I felt it then. And Grace treated me very generously. Poor thing! I can see her now, making herself speak, and the words seeming to burn her lips, and her eyes burning mine.”



“And after that? Go on, do.”

Harry recounted the rest of the conversation. “So I did leave, and went into the woods to forget the whole thing; but I couldn’t; that was a wretched time; I hate to think of it now. Still I meant to stay quiet in town anyway. I never expected to meet Thyra. But when I chanced on her, drawing back because there was such a crowd, and alone, as I thought,—well, I made her come with me. Now you can wash your hands of me, since I’ve proved myself not a man of my word.”

“No. I’ll stand by you. I have already, though it was really on Grace’s account. You see, Hawk is Lang’s counsel; and he planned to distinguish himself at everybody else’s expense by making a great case—”

“Lang’s an unsuspected genius to choose him. When Hawk’s on one side, he makes the other infamous and ridiculous both at once. He’s a born torturer. I can stand my own share; but Thyra! And if he called your cousin as a witness! Mont, can’t we do something? I owe it to both of them to keep them out of his hands somehow. He’s not over-fond of you, and she—”

“It’s done. I have made him give us easy terms; Grace escapes altogether, and everything is to be settled with as little publicity as possible. I know enough about Hawk to ruin him, as I’ll tell you later; it’s a long story. He hates me for that, but though he’s as false as hell, this



time he must do as he agrees, or it might mean state-prison. At the time I first found him out,—not a month ago,—I wasn't sure that he was the man, or that it mightn't all be a black-mailing trick of his accusers; they were strangers to me, and I came across them by the merest chance. But I found they were honest when I risked throwing it in his teeth. How the shot told! You've no idea how he lost his fighting-cock airs all at once; he fairly crawled. Bah! it's disgusting to see a fellow such a coward."

"But did he suspect how much your cousin knew?"

"He supposed she might have noticed some telling trifle; but nothing to the purpose."

"You made a hit there. I believe it would almost kill her to give her evidence. Do you mean to show up Hawk on his own account afterwards?"

"No; I hate the whole thing, I'm not an informer, and besides it's too late to right their wrongs. If they want to revenge themselves, they may do it in their own time, without me. I've secured all I want. Now I'll see you to the end of your affair, on one condition."

"What's that? But anything you like; I'm in your debt, if ever man was."

"Only that Grace's name is never mentioned between us any more."

"Oh, but, my dear fellow! I must know whether she believes what I wrote her or not. I don't want her to



think worse of me than I am; she is too like you after all for me to stand that. Ask her for the letter; make her every apology you can; no excuses though, for there are none possible from me to her."

"Well, if she listens to me, I will tell you. Otherwise, I had better say nothing about it."

"I suppose so. Anyhow, you're only too good a friend."

"Perhaps; but I haven't the impudence to lend a hand to society in punishing you."

"Society's not so much better than I am, that it should have the right."

"You may help yourself with that, I suppose, after all, —if you can."

"Hasn't it helped you?"

"No."

"I wonder what you would think if the countess had treated you better."

"Ask yourself that in ten years' time."

"But won't Hawk play you some dirty trick by way of return for your defense of me?"

"He's too well frightened; besides I shall be out of his reach abroad. I'm going to Europe to look after my nephew Tony."

"Who on earth is he? I'm sure I never heard of him before."



“Why, I had a sister Mary once, and we were fond of each other too; but she would marry. My brother-in-law, John Waveney, was a good fellow in his way, only it was a crotchety, impracticable one. He was a mining engineer, and might have done very well if he had stuck to that; but he strayed off into inventions which never could be made to work, and talked Mary over in throwing away her money on them. I objected to that last proceeding; so we quarreled; she took his side, and that parted us. She’s dead this seven years, poor thing! Tony was their only child. I liked the little fellow; but after his mother’s death Waveney would never let me see him. To be sure, for a good while I wasn’t the best of company; still, what harm would I have done such a baby? He can’t be more than eighteen even now. In two years Waveney married again, picking up the most insignificant little creature possible for his second wife; then he went abroad to economize, and ended by dying of consumption last March. As soon as I heard he hadn’t long to live, I wrote and offered to take care of Tony. The answer was a flat refusal, with an assurance that the boy was fully provided for. But now Mrs. Waveney sends me an incoherent jumble of woes in the form of a letter from Germany. I gather from it that her husband was misinformed concerning my character, which later and truer



reports, 'and especially the very kind and gentlemanly letter preserved among poor John's papers,' show to be no bad one; that she is left quite destitute, with three children of her own to bring up; that her relations may be expected to help them, but of course have no interest in her step-son; and that Tony is at a German School of Mines, very unhappy and discontented, and without a whole suit of clothes or a decent pair of shoes; therefore, if I would reconsider— So I have business cut out for me, and must try not to blunder it. Once you go West, I'm off for the other side."

"You're always helping on somebody."

"Badly enough, I'm afraid. This time I must do my best; he shan't turn out as good-for-nothing as I am, whatever happens. But to finish with your affairs first— Oh, I must tell you; Benson is very much disturbed. He came to see me last night, in a suspicious frame of mind, evidently trying to find out if I thought you likely to give him the slip. 'What for does he get himself into such a scrape just now? But he never was the least bit of a practical man.' Then with a burst of confidence, or a deep design of making an impression on your feelings through me, 'I can't do without him; if he goes back on me, I may as well shut up shop.'"

"He has had experiences, poor fellow; but so have I; and we shan't give each other any new ones, I think."



They talked together for some time longer; at last Tyne said, "I must be off."

"Can you get back to town to-night?"

"Yes, and I must. Good-bye; you shall hear from me soon."



## CHAPTER X.

GRACE was on the watch for Tyne the morning after his conversation with Harry; Mrs. Bishop had notified her that her cousin had something to tell. The elder lady lingered a few minutes in the little parlor after Tyne's arrival; but as in her presence the others avoided the subject which she knew they meant to speak of, she withdrew. Of course, she assured herself, she should hear the whole from Grace afterwards; though it must be owned her niece had hitherto refused to discuss the affair with her.

As she went out, Tyne drew nearer Grace, studying her looks anxiously.

“When can you show me Sundon's letter?” he began.

“I have it here. What has he told you? The truth, I wonder? As I understand the matter, there is not a falser man to be found. What excuses does he make?”

“He bid me tell you he had none; only apologies to you.”

“And what to the Langs?”



“Grace, can you not give me your own story?”

“I do so hate it; but I must have your advice; nobody else can help me, for who else could understand?” “Unless,” she mentally added, “one to whom I could not apply, even were he here.”

“Or if you choose, only tell me what happened after Sundon left; he has made no secret to me of the way he behaved to you, and upon my word, he is very thoroughly ashamed of that. If he was not, I shouldn’t have a word to say to you about it.”

“You believe him?”

“Yes, I do! and I think you will in the end. But now, what follows?”

“Once he had gone, I think Mr. Lang and Mrs. Brink were to blame. They frightened Thyra so between them, her mother threatening her with the next world, and her husband with this, that I thought she would lose her reason; if indeed she has any, which I am not sure of.”

“Why, Lang said as much himself.”

“Poor man, if he had believed that sooner! I spoke at last to the mother; but she did not take it in good part. ‘Oh, she knows well enough; she’s as sly as a cat, and as smart.’ Such a mistake! I never myself saw so open and so weak a creature; it is a cowardly thing of a man to mislead any one so defenseless.”

“You are speaking of my friend, Grace.”



“Why need he be your friend any longer?”

“Well, what else?”

“She really tried to forget, poor thing. She would come over and sit with me, bring her work, and talk of the people at the hotel, or her husband’s plans for next year; but after a while she would put me questions as to what had become of such a woman who had had a scandal in her life, or what I believed would happen to such a one after death; then she would break down and cry. Still I hoped the matter would wear itself out, when unluckily Mr. Lang had to go to Baltimore on business; Mrs. Brink thought so hot a journey—it was in those two or three sudden sunstroke days we had—would be too much for Thyra, but that she must have change of air now notwithstanding. So those two started for the White Mountains together, Mr. Lang, who left here the day before, planning to join them later. Thyra herself did not know what was to come of the trip, I am sure. She did not want to go.”

“Then how can you suspect Sundon as you do?”

“He must have been on the look-out for her.”

“In Maine! Or do you suppose he had any way of communication with her?”

“Nothing could have reached her; she was too closely watched. But it was no use. Mrs. Brink returned quite beside herself, and I had to comfort her as best I



could—that is, to listen to her sorrow, for there was no hope to give. Soon after, this letter came.”

She took it from her work-basket and handed it to him, watching his face while he read.

“DEAR MISS DELAHAY,—You probably have heard that I have failed to keep my promise to you; but you must not believe that I intended or planned to fail; I had no such thought when we parted. Though circumstances proved at last too strong for me, yet I shall not yet entirely break my word. I told you I should not forsake Thyra if she were mine; and I will not; your hearing of her as Mrs. Sundon is only a question of time.

“I have no words to tell you how I regret my conduct towards you, and if your cousin Mont thinks it requires severe notice, I shall not dispute his judgment, and am ready to meet it. But I assure you that if you wish to seem ignorant of this affair of mine, I shall do my utmost to second you in that. As far as it depends on me, your name shall not be brought before the public. Please show this to Mont; he will take any steps you require, I am sure. Yours truly,

“HARRY SUNDON.”

“Well, Grace,” said Tyne, “what more can we expect, under the circumstances?”

“Does it please you? I thought it was too absurd. He knows I should not ask you to fight a duel, or to knock him down in the street. But I ought to be very much obliged to him because he is afraid to call me as a witness, ought not I?”



“Don’t be so bitter. You have not seen him since. I have. He is only telling the truth when he says he meant to keep his word. He really would have, but for a perfectly accidental meeting; and if he failed in the main point, you see he will still be as honest as he can in the present state of the case.”

“I am not sure that that makes it any better. It leaves him still with a debt to Mr. Lang that he can never settle,—yes, and to Thyra too.”

“At least do not think he was deceiving you at first. He has quite enough to repent of without your charging him with that.”

“You know men, I believe. But what am I to do with my information? I feel as if either to speak or be silent was treacherous.”

“You have a right to silence, Grace; you can tell nothing that is not already known to others; there are plenty of witnesses without you; and I have settled that you shall not be called.”

“Dear Mont! you have saved me a hard trial indeed.”

“Now for that, promise me that you will believe what I tell you of Sundon.”

“I could easier think you were taken in by his clever acting.”

“I understand him too well for that. He is only too much himself off the boards.”



“If you could say he repented at all—but he is not that kind of man. And that being so, why do you still stand by him?”

“Grace, I think you know no more of my life than the outline everybody has heard, and certainly I do not mean to tell you more; but I feel myself to have been a worse man than he—”

“Once, perhaps, but not to-day. Now, you might surely make yourself free of him.”

“He has no hold on me unless I choose. I might leave him to himself, except that it would be too unjust of me, and at this time of all others; so I will not.”

“Does he think you approve of him?”

“No, for I told him the contrary, more frankly, I am afraid, than was fair on my part. And he does feel ashamed of his behavior towards you.”

“And towards Thyra he thinks he is not to blame? He looks on that as an everyday matter? He says he loves her, yet his love makes him only the more willing to disgrace her, and that before the world?”

“There will not be a public trial, Grace.”

“But the public will know the result and visit it on her. You are strange creatures, you men; I would rather put half the world between any one I loved and me than bring that one so low.”

“Yes, you haven’t any idea what love is, good or bad—



what a power, what a force, to draw and compel two distant people to the same place, two strangers to intimacy, two quiet souls to extremes, two hot ones to one fire. You have been sister and friend to me, but whom have you ever loved? I don't blame you for refusing Corbin; he was not enough of a man for you; but you're just as cool to everybody. I should like you once to feel your heart beat quick for some one's coming and going—Why! Am I wrong? I did not know, dear, believe me! You have kept your secret only too well."

Grace, overtaxed and worn with emotion and recollection, had burst into tears; those bitter tears that are no relief, only added pain.

"I meant no one ever should know!" she said.

"Why not? No love you can feel would be anything but honor to you and the man. Don't make yourself wretched by distrusting him either; every one has not so much against him as Sundon and I; some are better than others, believe me, and you are keen-sighted enough to know which."

"Yes, I am sure. The other day, when the very sky seemed to fall on me, I could not tell; but now I can."

"At all events, you go with the Romaines?"

"Yes, and I am very glad to. They have always been such good friends to me. Little Helen has rather grown



out of my knowledge, but she is prettier and fonder of me than ever; and once we are settled in Texas—”

“Why, I hoped, now the Major’s leave was up, they were coming back to Fort Hamilton for good. What does he mean by carrying you off into the wilderness?”

“He is ordered to San Antonio, which people say is a pleasant post; and since Mrs. Romaine has come in for her great-uncle’s money, they will be able to live very comfortably.”

“It seems as if you were going to the moon, to me.”

“Why, when you are abroad, what difference does it make where I am on this side?”

“Unless it should separate you from your lover.”

“Mine! that is too much to say. I know he cannot care for me; he is as far from me in his thoughts as in miles and hours.”

“He will love you yet, Grace, I am sure, if you only let him. Do I know him?”

“Hush, aunt is coming back, she must not hear. All we have said to-day must be between ourselves.”

“Now,” thought Tyne, “who is it? Belden, perhaps. Does he deserve her love, I wonder? I might set Harry to finding out about him in San Francisco— No. We had best not meddle with Grace’s affairs; she understands them, and they ought to be left sacred to her.”

That evening Tyne received a note, requesting him to



come to a certain number in a street where he was not in the habit of visiting; "Hannah Brink" was the signature. In a forlorn little parlor he found Thyra's mother, who seemed the more to be pitied that her appearance in no way reminded one of her daughter. He would gladly have given her some of his own composure; the stiff manner with which she armed herself was plainly a feeble defense against her own agitation.

"Mr. Tyne, I am informed you are in Mr. Sundon's confidence," she began.

"That is quite true, Mrs. Brink."

"Of course then you can tell me what he intends in regard to my daughter."

"He means to marry her as soon as she is divorced from her present husband."

"Why, Mr. Hawk assured me that he certainly would not do that."

"Mr. Hawk knows nothing of his plans; I know them all."

"I thought that possible, so I took the liberty of sending for you. Would you kindly wait a moment?"

She was gone some time. When she returned, she began again, "You may not know, Mr. Tyne, that it is difficult to find a minister who will perform a marriage ceremony under such circumstances."

"There are other legal means—"



“But, Mr. Tyne! In all probability this is the last I shall have to do with my daughter in this world; but if she marries, her marriage must be—” she paused for a word—“sanctified.”

“Impossible in this case,” Tyne thought, “whatever you do, poor woman!”

“I know of a minister,” Mrs. Brink went on, “who was under obligations to my father, and is willing to discharge them by obliging me. Only he does not feel at liberty to have it very generally known.”

“We will be as discreet as you please. Now as to time and place?”

“When the divorce is granted, I will fix an evening and let you know. This is the house; I am visiting the minister’s wife, who is an old friend of mine. But not a syllable, I beg of you, to any one not concerned. Mr. Lang thinks I have renounced my daughter altogether; and he is right. He leaves New York soon; I shall go with him and keep house for him wherever he settles; we are alone in the world, and he is not likely to marry again. But first I must do this. A mother owes her children some things, even when they are lost.”

“I understand.” Looking at that worn face, Tyne felt bitter against Thyra; yet at the same time he thought, “If she means to cast her daughter off, why should she stop first for a matter of form? If I were Thyra, I would



be content with what the law can do; this is not a last blessing, but a farewell curse, that her mother gives."

Thyra however did not see it so. In due time, therefore, the dreary wedding party met. The minister's wife, the only unconcerned person present, was so deaf that she could not hear a word that passed; and as no explanation was given her, and she did not remember Thyra, not having seen her since babyhood, supposed that some entire strangers had happened in to be married quietly. Mrs. Brink's cold and formal reception of her daughter was well calculated to keep up this impression. Thyra, in a dark traveling-dress, silent, pale, frightened, at once clung to Harry and shrank from him; keeping close at his side, she did not yet venture a familiar look or word to him. Tyne happening to catch sight of his own face in a looking-glass, was startled at its "funeral air," as he said to himself; and Harry had the gravity of a man waiting for an attack which he knows he must endure and cannot repulse. The minister, little, old, and feeble, was so embarrassed, notwithstanding the almost deferential manner of bridegroom and bridegroom's friend to him, by their vigorous presences and their composure, that he forgot the moral lecture he had intended, and confined himself to business. The wedding was soon over. Thyra, holding her husband's hand, then timidly made a step forward, saying, "Mo-



ther!" Mrs. Brink, keeping her hands at her side, kissed her daughter on the forehead, then turned away and walked out of the room without a word to any one. Thyra stood trembling and shivering from that icy kiss; Harry thought she would faint, and hurried her out into the air. Tyne staid a few minutes longer, hoping Mrs. Brink might give him some word of forgiveness for her daughter; but it was to no purpose.

The next day Tyne sailed. There was no one he already knew on the steamer; but when Grace came with two ladies of her acquaintance,—elderly people, shy, timid, and so unaccustomed to traveling that without her help they would hardly have found their way on board,—he told her he should consider them under his care; and indeed they talked of "that very polite young man" for years after.

Grace herself had but a few moments to stay, on account of her preparations for her own journey.

"Little sister," said Tyne, as he walked to the steps with her, "I don't leave you as I could wish; why are you not to be happy yet?"

Her eyes had been turned aside a moment, with a look of watching for some one who never came, now her frequent expression; but she brought them back at once to meet his, and pressed his hand warmly, saying, "Dear brother!"



All at once she started back; Harry Sundon stood before them. He too was still in New York, and had come to see the last he could of Tyne.

Since their conversation by the sea, Tyne had taken both past and future for granted, and served his friend without question or remark. Harry had meanwhile reasoned with himself that after all he had conducted the affair as openly as possible, and that his marrying Thyra "ought to make it all right." But that did not protect him from the inference to be drawn from Tyne's never having spoken of Grace again. Now, in her presence, seeing the instant change that came over her, and how the affectionate approachableness of her air as she took leave of Tyne vanished at sight of himself, Harry knew what she thought, and felt that it mattered a good deal to him somehow. Yet this repulse irritated him so, that he chanced in his anger on the very way to provoke a more decided one. He came forward, smiling, his hand held out to her.

"Ah, Miss Delahay, how do you do? So glad to meet you again."

Grace did not even look at him; she turned on her heel, soldier-fashion, and left the ship without another word. Tyne made a step as if to follow her.

"Best let her alone, Mont," said Harry, dropping his voice, and laying his hand on his friend's arm. "She



is right enough; I shouldn't have been so easy; and people will notice; let her go. But is she all alone?"

"She expected the Romaines; there they are. Are they coming back? no, they are gone now. There's such a crowd; let's get out of it. Come down aft, by the wheel, we shall have more room. There's plenty of time, and I want to see all I can of you; we mayn't meet again this many a day."



## CHAPTER XI.

THE man who knows how to keep a hotel is very likely to set more than one running. Tyne's old acquaintance Start, not finding field enough for his energies at the house in the Narrows, had in the course of time made an additional venture many miles off, on the south shore of Long Island. At first a small place frequented mostly by men who went a blue-fishing, it began to grow popular in his hands with other visitors, till he found he must enlarge it. To do so to the best advantage, he had just bought the strip of land alongside; a poor barren field agriculturally, but worth something for his purpose. One day in the end of August, therefore, the owner came over to close the bargain. Of course he must dine and stay the night; that was the thing, particularly as—on the host's part—the sale had not been arranged without a good deal of question.

This owner was Felix Belden, returning to the East for the first time after four years' absence. He had lately been advised that now was the best time to sell his property, but that it had been so mismanaged that his presence



was needed. This proved quite true; further, what with arrears of taxes and assessments that had not been duly reported, the money realized from the sale was not by any means enough to completely carry out his old plans; particularly as he must incur fresh expenses on his return to California. The San Francisco climate was too trying for Florence; he had therefore decided to remove to a milder region in the south of the state.

He had not prospered greatly yet; by denying himself everything not demanded by his profession, he had kept his head above water, and made his sister as comfortable as she would allow him; in view of her dependence on him, he had not let himself be tempted into any of the speculations that flourished and fluctuated about them; so at least he did not lose ground; only in his own eyes he gained none. Florence had spoken out just before he started on his journey, telling him plainly that Grace would surely be content with much less than his visioned least, and that if he loved her, he might marry her now; but he was not convinced.

It fretted him to revisit the old neighborhoods, little better off than when he went, and with his father's debts still unpaid; but worse yet was the finding old places empty of people he cared to see, only indifferent faces remaining. Grace and Florence were always steady correspondents; but in hopes of hearing more, Felix had looked



up Mrs. Bishop. She was re-established in the large house, with more money, and the companionship of a shadowy poor relation. The visit disappointed Felix. "Grace does not write very often," said Mrs. Bishop; "she has nothing to tell but military matters, and she knows they do not interest me. She is not likely to return to the East; the Romaines are very kind to her, and they may not leave San Antonio for years yet. If she had received any money from my nephew Monteith's estate her plans might have been changed, but she did not. His will was found only the other day among some old papers; it divided his property between Grace and my great-nephew, Tony Waveney. But even if we had discovered it before, it would have been of no value, on account of Mr. Goring's failure, which happened almost simultaneously with Monteith's death. My nephew had very foolishly put all his money in that one investment, and it turned out that Mr. Goring had contrived to make away with everything. He disappeared at once, and nothing has ever been recovered. Mr. Hawk was at one time on his track, in the interests of other parties equally plundered; but was killed in a railroad accident, or at least found dead afterwards on the spot; there were suspicions of murder, though no positive proof—and I imagine the matter has been abandoned since. It has been very unfortunate for Grace."



“Surely,” said Felix. He had known Tyne after his return from Europe, and for a while feared him as a possible rival. Now the failure of the dead man’s last intentions was a curious and unexpected disappointment to the living. If Grace had had this money, she would have been able to marry where she pleased; yet it had not been so great a sum as to make the world call her lover a fortune-hunter,—though Felix would have dared that, or indeed anything but his one fear of bringing her to a struggling home life. But Mrs. Bishop must not suspect his story.

“My nephew died very suddenly, as he was returning from abroad,” the old lady went on; “it was a case of unsuspected heart-disease. My worst fears for him, that the end would find him totally unprepared, were quite realized. I am afraid too that his influence on Tony was a bad one; for directly the boy was left to himself he went on the stage, as perhaps you know.”

“I had heard so much.”

“I wrote Tony a letter of advice and condolence on his uncle’s death; but it had merely the effect that he has never come near me since. Still we have had a little business correspondence, about Monteith’s papers, some of which concerned my property. But finally the child has sent me his wedding-cards! I have mislaid them; and I forget the bride’s name; it is not a familiar



one, to me at least. If you could procure me some reliable information about her, Doctor Belden, you would greatly oblige me. I imagine that he has married beneath him; but if she is respectable, I shall feel it my duty to visit her."

"I shall be very glad to help you."

"So absurdly imprudent that he should marry at all. He has only been on the stage a year, and I believe plays very trifling parts; how is he to support a family? It is strange how many misfortunes, we have in our connection. Some people do so well! My old friend Mrs. Corbin's son, for instance,—to be sure, he left Mr. Goring in good time."

"I used to know Charley Corbin, what has become of him?"

"Oh, he's been most fortunate; he fell in love with a young girl from St. Louis, that he met at Narragansett; her father, who is very rich, took him into his business when they married, and he is very successful, and very good to his mother and sisters. The girls are both engaged now—" and she enlarged on their prospects for some time.

Leaving Mrs. Bishop, Felix had strayed down to the shore, which he found little changed. This region was sacred to Grace in his mind; but to his great annoyance, the talk of two passing strollers raised an association which



struck him as insufferably mean and vulgar in contrast with her image. A pair of young fellows were standing on the beach, looking at the Firebrace house. "And that's where Mr. Sundon boarded that summer," said one, as if concluding a story.

"Oh, is it?" answered the other. "It must have looked nicer then, for anybody to stay there." The house indeed was neglected and shabby, old Firebrace having died and left a disputed will.

Felix had heard Sundon's story as a piece of gossip, after Benson's company had gone away from San Francisco; stories traveling more slowly in those days than now. It had completed for him his first impression of Harry. They had never met,—poor hard-worked Felix saw little enough society, except medically—but the Doctor knew Harry by sight, both on and off the stage. The theatrical impression was a pleasant one; here was real art, that one might be enthusiastic about without exaggeration. Notwithstanding, Felix disliked the man, setting him down as fast, untrustworthy, and self-seeking; those touches of refinement and generous feeling that made his acting so admirable were probably all studied, caught from keen observation of others,—poor Tyne, for instance, he who had not been entirely bad by any means, and who perhaps Grace was mourning; while it was not likely any woman worth thinking of would ever



regret Sundon. Felix had also had a glimpse of Thyra, but she had impressed him little; she was "only a beauty," he said. The company had gone to Australia after a while, with a successful record; he had not followed their course since.

At Start's house on the south shore, Felix thought he had left all this behind. His business done, he sat in his room overlooking the sea, finishing a letter to Florence; but ran short of writing paper, and descended to the office to borrow a sheet. It was near tea-time (the house dined early, but the tea was all but a second dinner); people who had been out on the water came back in small parties, reporting a fine breeze and plenty of fish.

"Has Mr. Sundon got in yet, do you know, Doctor?" Start inquired of Felix, as he gave him the paper. "His room's next yours."

"I haven't seen him. Is he staying here?"

"He dropped down all of a sudden this morning, he and his wife, and were out on the water before you came. Lucky I had a front room, or they'd have been off again. They came here for quiet, and the house is packed like a beehive; a half-dozen people left at twelve, to be sure, but the late train'll bring more than enough to fill up, I expect. He's turned more particular about accommodations than he used to be when he was one of five at Firebrace's; to be sure, the ladies have their fancies, you



know. But the sooner they're on shore now the better; the wind's falling, and if it comes up again it'll be with a thunder-squall. Do you know Mr. Sundon, Doctor?"

"Only by sight."

"I'll make you acquainted, if you like."

"It's not worth while, thank you. I must leave to-morrow; and if he wants a quiet time, a stranger would only bore him."

"I guess he's hardly your style anyhow, Doctor; too much of the sporting man for you. Mr. Tyne, now, would have been more your kind; plenty of go in him, but always the gentleman. Not that I'm saying anything against Mr. Sundon, but they do tell me he has the devil's own temper; though I never knew him get up on his ear when I was round, I ought to say. But I don't believe he means it; only he's one of those unlucky people that can't stand anything much to drink, the second glass flies to their heads, you know; hard lines for a social man. And Mrs. Sundon, how she's gone off! Nobody would run away with her now, poor thing. It's hard on such a soft kind of woman to have had two men grabbing for her that way, pulls her all to pieces. Miss Delahay, Mr. Tyne's cousin that was, was better style, though never so pretty to begin with. I always wondered Mr. Tyne didn't marry her; just as well now though he didn't, to leave her a poor widow."



This jumble of names and recollections was unpleasant enough to Felix; he was not sorry that the tea-time gong cut it short.

At tea, he found himself opposite three empty seats; in a few minutes two of them were taken by people he at once recognized as the Sundons. "Am I never to get away from them?" thought Felix, impatiently; then, "How foolish to take them so seriously! They are only part of the local curiosities."

This last idea seemed to be shared by the rest of the company. It was rather a miscellaneous crowd that bordered the long narrow table; and some of the ladies seemed as if they might have histories in time to come; this did not prevent them from looking down from a higher plane at Mrs. Sundon, who had already had hers. From the hardly whispered remarks made among the large party on his left, Felix gathered that the past season in New York had been marked by professional success for the husband and social failure for the wife. The men regarded Thyra with much less of insolent admiration than their stares had betokened in San Francisco; for she had faded indeed; her eyes were heavy and downcast, her skin a pasty white, her hair a much smaller coil than formerly. She cast furtive glances, alarmed and timid, along the unfriendly line of faces; or towards her husband, as if she wished his support, but feared reproof for seeking



it; then would try to disguise her distress with a forced smile. Harry, on his part, seemed equally unmoved by her pain and the inquisitive attention of the company. When silent, he looked a little bored; but most of the time he kept up a brisk conversation with the men nearest him,—big noisy fellows of Goring's pattern, who, as Start would have said, "talked the *New York Clipper* like a minister talks the Bible." They kept each other in a roar of laughter; Harry amused himself and them by imitations of people they knew, by new variations on well-worn sporting men's themes, by pretenses at being shocked when anything specially cynical was said, made in the form of mock disclaimers really more intense in cynicism than the original speech. He was the only clever one of the set; but the others aired their dull wits with great complacency. The largest and loudest of them all, who sat beside Felix, occasionally leaned over the table and addressed some trifling remark to Thyra; she would reply inaudibly, and he would make her repeat her answer. After this had happened three or four times, she suddenly rose and left the room.

"What's the matter with your wife, Harry?" said Felix's neighbor.

"Oh, she's got a headache," Harry answered carelessly; "she always has before a thunder-shower; it's as good as a barometer."



“Yes, mighty convenient!” And no more was said of her, only Felix thought, “Poor woman! whatever wrong she did her former husband, this one is likely to return with interest.”

People began before long to leave the table; but Harry and his companions lingered; Harry took to telling stories that were hard not to laugh at, and yet were flavored with quite too coarse salt, notwithstanding their wit. At the same time, he was carefully watching Felix, as if he thought him some acquaintance he ought to recognize, but could not recall. This soon struck the Doctor as too much; he put an end to it by going away to finish his letter.

His writing done, Felix put out his light, not to draw mosquitoes, and sat for how long he could not tell, thinking of past and future; but most of all of Grace. The rising moon was struggling with the heavy low-flying ragged clouds. Felix vaguely considered whether he would go down to the beach to see the coming shower better; but after all did not move. Suddenly he was startled by a rough, bantering voice, saying, “Now, Thyra, what possessed you to make such a fool of yourself this evening? Tell me that.”

The speaker seemed to be at Felix’s elbow; yet no one had been in the room the moment before. Felix turned his head, and found the explanation; he was



sitting close to a door which led into the next room; being ill-fitted and having sunk, there was a space at the top of it through which the sounds came distinctly. In a breath the plaintive answer followed: "I had such a headache; you know I had, Harry."

"That doesn't matter. A woman of the world knows how to disguise a headache when she is in a public place; and my wife must be a woman of the world, if she wants to go about with me."

"Now don't begin scolding. Suppose any one should hear!"

"Who can? This room's on the corner of the house, and anybody on the other side of us would be sure to show a light. Nobody but you wants to sit in the dark with the June-bugs."

"It's too late for those horrid things. Well, if you are going to be cross, I hope nobody's there, and I wish you had staid down-stairs," in a quivering voice.

Felix, though with some compunction, decided not to make his presence known; a plan he had reason not to regret.

"In four years," Sundon went on, "you might get used to things."

"I couldn't help it."

"None of your little fibs, my dear; don't waste your ammunition on me; I understand you too well to make



it worth your while. You won't face the notice you and I have invited by our way of living. You worried and fretted me away from Newport, just as I was beginning to enjoy myself, and got me into this dull little hole,—a damned dull life we shall have of it here, I can let you know,—and now you're just as bad as before."

"I never would have asked you to come if I had known what kind of a place it was. Why didn't you tell me?"

"How could I? The house has changed since my day. You don't mind our old friend Start, at least, do you?"

"Yes. He doesn't treat me properly. The way he looks at me and talks to me, one would think I was a naughty child."

"So you were when he knew you first."

"Harry!"

"What's the matter now? One mayn't touch you with a feather. I haven't called any hard names, though there are plenty in English; or if you'd rather, French or Italian; I picked up a lot of Italian once from some opera-people, and I haven't forgotten it all yet."

"Harry, you've been drinking, that's what makes you so cross. And you know you oughtn't to, it's so bad for you."

"What else can a man do in a place like this, with such a thick-headed gang of fellows for company as we had to-night? a man that's been hard-worked all winter



and spring, and plagued by his wife all summer? Well, suppose I have had a drop too much, you can't say I'm really drunk. Perhaps you'd like it better if I was."

"You know I wouldn't."

"Like that Australian you remember? Nice fellow! I thrashed him pretty well, I believe. You might be more grateful; but it's like you. Much of a *bonne camarade* you are! I knew when I first saw you you were a little dunce, only good to listen to what one said and to look pretty; but that you would turn out such a fretful whining thing, without the courage of a fly, not able to carry out what you began—"

"What more can I do, Harry?"

"Be bold and face the world as if you didn't care a continental for it. Laugh and talk with whoever comes; snub people that snub you, and never show it if you are hurt."

"I tried that last winter."

"Did you? You were too half-hearted about it, then; never brave, never sure of yourself. You behaved as if you were my mistress, not my wife."

"Those women are brazen enough."

"They know how to play their part; and you won't even learn yours. I'm ashamed of you. After all I've done for you, you might show you appreciated it."

"What have you done for me so much? To make me



wretched just to please yourself? was that what you promised me?"

"Do you mean I'm not a man of my word? I think I am, and better too, if anything. I never need have married you; I might have left you any time I chose, and who could have called me to account?"

"Mr. Tyne. He thought you owed me something, and—"

"What makes you speak of the dead? It's unlucky; stop it."

"He was always so good to me."

"Yes, out of politeness; but all the time he despised you, and thought you weren't good enough for me. Before we ran away, he wanted me to marry his cousin Grace. I'm glad enough I didn't; I couldn't bear her, with her cold heart and her virtuous airs; she would have kept me tied down tight, or made a hypocrite of me; but you're just as bad in your own way."

"Oh, what's that noise?"

At the mention of Grace, Felix had started, pushing back his chair unconsciously.

"Rats, most likely," Harry remarked.

"Oh, are there rats in this house? I should die if I saw one."

"Dozens of them. But you're tougher than that; now don't make me wish you weren't."



“Oh!”

“I could do without you pretty well; don’t you make it easier for me.”

“What do you mean? You promised you would never send me back to my mother, and now she’s dead. You know you can’t break our marriage—you know—”

“Look here, Thyra; I’ve been really a good husband to you, better than many men would have been; but if you go on making yourself ridiculous and me uncomfortable,—why then, when I want any woman’s company, it won’t be yours.”

“You mean you’ve fallen in love with some other woman?”

“Not yet; and I’m not very likely to, after my experience; still even a man of sense don’t always know how he will act in a given case; and I have had to confess myself a fool in that line more than once.”

“Do you love me at all any more?”

“Not a great deal; perhaps I never shall again as you understand that sentiment. But if you only choose, we may get along tolerably well in future, now we’ve once had it out together. It all depends on you; keep up your spirits, and I’ll keep my temper; then if we don’t care much about each other, at least we shall have peace.”

“I wish I was dead! I wish I had died long, long ago, when I was a girl! Or when you loved me and



went away,—that would have been the time. But I'll die yet, and you shall be sorry for it too."

"If you always were the way you are now, I don't think I should. If you want to be my torment, you can plague me most by living. But I know you; to-morrow you'll be as sweet as honey to me again. Only stay so, if you want me not to get too tired of you. Now let me have a nap. I'm sleepy. After that we'll go down-stairs and see if anybody I know came by the late train."

Nothing more was said; but Felix now felt obliged still to listen. The despairing tone of Thyra's voice in the latter part of the conversation had alarmed him; he was sure that she would try to do herself some harm, and that her husband would not watch to prevent it. Soon Harry's heavy breathing told he was asleep. Then Thyra, moving cautiously, stole to her door, opened it, and went out along the hall. As soon as he heard her steps descending the back stairs, Felix slipped out and followed her.

Along one side of the hotel ran a road, which led by many turns to the rather distant railroad station. Near the house a shady lane struck off, at the end of which was a little pond, not too shallow to drown any one who wished. It could be seen, even in the darkness which had now fallen, gleaming faintly under the



swamp willows. Thyra took her way thither, as Felix had expected; she had noticed the water as she passed by in arriving, and she remembered it now. He followed her, keeping in the shadows. She never looked back. The cart-track led into the pond; she walked straight on. He hastened his steps; she heard him, and threw herself forward on her face; but he caught her as she fell. She struggled desperately with him, but he held her fast and brought her to the firm ground.

“Why don’t you let me alone?” she cried. “What do you stop me for? Who are you, that you won’t let me die in peace?”

“It is not your time yet, Mrs. Sundon.”

“What do you know about it? Get away. Yes, I am Mrs. Sundon, and I was Mrs. Lang, and I always shall be the most miserable woman on earth, and you won’t let me make an end; for I tell you it would be one, no matter what you ministers think. The Lord would give me one day’s rest in my grave, whatever came next.”

“I am not a minister; I am a doctor.”

“That’s just as bad. You’re all alike; one thinks he understands people’s souls, and one their bodies, but neither of them do any good. What use are they all indeed? All the ministers that came to my mother’s house taught me nothing to keep me from going wrong.



All the doctors didn't save me my children. I've lost four now—all I had—none left me. And you must come and interfere. Oh, do let me go!—do let me die!—do, do!”

She would have fallen on her knees before him, if he had not held her up. A last ray of moonlight, breaking through the clouds and between the thick willows, struck on his face, and showed it to her, pitying and kind.

“If you could make things right between my husband Harry Sundon and me,” she felt moved to say, “you might stop me; but I know you can't.”

“Let me try.”

“No, you never can now. He'd find out what I've meant to do, and he'd never forgive me. Perhaps he'd put me in an asylum for a madwoman; perhaps he would drive me really mad— You don't know what cruel things he can say; worst of all when he's been drinking; but after this he won't need that to set him on against me. Oh, I can't bear it.”

“You shall not have to. Come back, and let me talk to him.”

“It's no use; he doesn't care for me any more, he just told me so.”

“Did you say he had been drinking this evening?”

“Yes, he has.”

“Then he don't know what he has been saying; nor



you either now, you are so excited; but that doesn't matter. I can make him sober, and sorry for you too, and I will. Come now; we can get back to the house before any one finds out you have been gone."

"It is all full of rats, horrid rats!"

"Oh no, I know the house, there's not one in it."

"I heard them."

"It was a window shutting, or the furniture cracking. Never mind that."

She suffered him to lead her a few steps; then she stopped short.

"I can't, I can't, I—oh!"

A sudden tremendous clap of thunder rang out, at the same minute, it seemed, with the blaze of lightning that encircled them; then all was dark.

"Oh, are you killed?" cried Thyra. "You mustn't be killed for me."

"No, indeed. Come out of this; let me carry you, we shall go quicker."

He caught her up and made his way back as fast as he could through the wild weather; the dead darkness could hardly hold its own against the constant lightning-sheets; the rain rattled down in heavy torrents, the thunder hardly out-roaring it. At the house door he set her on her feet again, though still giving her his arm. The hotel was in confusion when they re-entered it; people



were running about shutting doors and windows, frightened children were crying; the stage from the late train, due an hour ago, but delayed by a tedious though trifling accident, had only just got in, and was discharging its load of fatigued and excited passengers, about accommodating all of whom there was some doubt. In this turmoil Thyra and Felix passed unobserved.

Harry Sundon, meanwhile, had been awakened by the first great thunderclap. He sat up and looked about him, wondered what time of night it was, and why he had gone to sleep in his clothes. He got up, found the rain dashing in; shut the window, lit a candle, splashed cold water on his head till he felt it clearer; looked at his watch, and saw it was not late yet; turned to speak to Thyra, but she was not there. Had she gone down into the parlor to find some company during the storm? she was so afraid of lightning; but then most likely she would have waked him. No, he had scolded her for doing that once, and she wouldn't again. Was that what they had been talking about before he went to sleep? He had been finding some fault with her; he could not remember what, but he was afraid he had been rather harder on her than was fair. To be sure, she did provoke him a good deal sometimes, often; she was getting to be a terrible drag on him; all that Tyne had prophesied of her had come true, he felt it. Was



that what he must pay for winning her as he had? Poor child, she was paying harder for her share in the case. These four years had been a time of professional success for him; and since his return home, people had begun to overlook the fact that the man who delighted them on the stage had had any stain on his private life. But she,—because she could give the public nothing, they made no allowances for her. He had plenty of friends and acquaintance, professional and other (though no one ever had filled or could fill Tyne's place with him); she, between the women that thought themselves too good and those he thought too bad for her, had no one of her own sex, and his friends troubled themselves very little about her now. If their children had lived, it would have helped matters; have given her comfort, and drawn her closer to him again. (Harry often talked as if he detested children, but he really was fond of them, and would have spoiled rather than neglected his own, if he had had the chance.) Now he was her only companion, and had he not failed in his part? He had even accepted civilities which should have included her as his wife or not have been extended to him; and she had felt that keenly. This case had only lately confronted him; but ought he not to put a stop to it? And after that, was there no more to do?

In answer, the door opened, and Felix came in with



Thyra; he alert and anxious, she faint and stupefied; both dripping with rain.

“Why, Thyra, what’s happened to you?” cried Harry in amazement. “You never would put your head out of doors before in a thunder-shower; and here you are a perfect fountain.”

“You’ll be angry with me,” she managed to say, as she dropped into a chair.

“Nonsense! what for? But who’s this?”

“Doctor Felix Belden, at your service,” answered the new-comer.

“Is that only politeness,” thought Harry, “or does he think one may be wanting him? Something’s wrong.” Then aloud, “Much obliged to you, Doctor. Now I think we’d better leave Mrs. Sundon to herself, and you can tell me what the matter is. Thyra, you take off your wet things and go to bed. I’ll have them send you up something warm to drink.” She was shivering all over.

“That’s the right prescription, Doctor, isn’t it?”

“As far as it goes,” said Felix. “Now, Mrs. Sundon, you must not be frightened; the storm is nearly over.”

“You’re as wet yourself as if you’d been in swimming, Doctor,” said Harry, as they came out.

“I have plenty of dry clothes. This is my room; when you are ready, I think we have a word to say to each other.”



Harry went rather uneasily to see about "something warm" for Thyra; the bell was broken, and he had to hunt up service for himself. He was half glad of the interruption, and half annoyed by it; he wanted a moment to compose himself, yet, uncertain what part to take, longed to encounter the new condition of things at once. Thyra's state was alarming; and the appearance of this unknown man, suddenly becoming concerned in their affairs, irritating to the highest degree. Some blame, perhaps, the new-comer had to give. Now self-accusation in silence and alone is one thing, but the same reproof from the lips of a stranger who has no share in your misdeeds is quite another.

Harry felt immediately on the defensive, yet could not resist a sense that it might be better to own himself in the wrong,—at least if the Doctor were disposed to make allowances.

When he knocked at Felix's door, the Doctor came out to meet him, with a candle in his hand.

"We must not talk here," he said; "everything can be overheard, and nothing could be worse for Mrs. Sundon just now. This room opposite is empty, for it is out of repair."

The ceiling of the room had lately fallen, and the rubbish was not yet cleared away; with some trouble they found themselves place among the wreck. The rosy fires



of the lightning were fainter; the rain still rattled down, but not so loud. The storm without was dying down. Was one to rise within?

"I thought this evening, Doctor," said Harry, intentionally taking the first word, "that you were an old acquaintance. I see I am mistaken; but I find I am to know you now. You understand what has happened in the last half-hour better than I. Is anything serious the matter with my wife?"

"She has been trying to drown herself."

"What for? You're joking, and it is not so good a joke either."

"No, I am in earnest, and so was she, on account of what you have been saying to her. I told you one might overhear from your room to mine."

"Why, what did I say? I know we had some sort of foolish quarrel, but I did not think I was so very unpleasant as that."

"If you had been sober, such talk would be unpardonable."

"I don't remember anything; do you?"

Felix had a better verbal memory than common; he was able to repeat the conversation (leaving out however what related to Grace, whose name he would not mention here) with a distinctness which made Harry protest more than once, "I'm sure I never said that."



"I shouldn't have thought of it by myself," was Felix's answer.

"Well," said Harry at last, "you have me at your mercy, it seems."

"How so? Do you suppose I would let this go any further?"

"No; you don't look like a reporter. But you see, you are in my wife's confidence, and you side with her."

"Only the better to reconcile you. What other thing can I or ought I to be thinking of? and it is surely within my province, though hardly within my power; that really belongs to you."

A recollection came before Harry of Grace's pleading with him for Thyra, long ago. That time he had failed in what he had undertaken, to be sure. Now he need not; this was after all but a trifle.

"Oh, well," he said, "there's no trouble to speak of about it; I have only to tell her the truth, that I didn't mean it, as I didn't,—I am really fond of her, I swear I am!—and she'll believe me."

"You will have to keep saying and showing that, and not contradict it by any hasty word or deed for a long time, to make her certainly trust you. This is not your first quarrel, and she has learned to doubt you."

"I'll cut the bottle, anyway; it's not easy, but it's got



to be done; I always treat her badly if I've had any too much."

"You had better on your own account too; you are one of those people that stimulants hurt more than they help, and take more from than they give."

"Upon my word, you speak with authority."

"Excuse me if I am too professional; where there is so much at stake, one uses all one's arms."

"Nobody has been so frank with me since my old friend Monty Tyne's day. Did you ever happen to know him?"

"Yes."

"What did you think of him?"

"As a man who, after all, was better than his reputation."

"You're not so stiff as I took you to be. Well—You say 'there is so much at stake;' what do you mean exactly? Is there anything you have not told me?"

"Yes. You have to hear the worst. Your wife has suffered a great shock, which will affect her both in body and mind; and her life for some years past must have been gradually unfitting her to bear it. The chances are, brain-fever now, with the possibility of her losing either her life or her reason; and if she recovers, there is still the risk of her being an invalid for the rest of her days."



"On my word, this stuff here had better have come down on my head."

"No; if you have not killed her, you may save her yet."

"But what's to be done first of all? What's to be done now?"

"Tell her that you are not angry, that you don't hate her, that you have not forsaken her; tell her anything affectionate,—and mean it if you can."

"Easy enough."

"At present she had best not see any one but yourself. If you cannot calm her, call me; but I think you can now. Possibly we may ward off this first attack, though I can be sure of nothing before morning."

"I'll see." Harry left the room at once.

Thyra had been waiting nervously during this talk, sick with anticipation of what Harry might say once they were alone together. She had no power of resistance before him. What might appear like a defense was only the instinctive outcry of a wounded creature. Against Lang's domination she had made head sometimes in former days; but Sundon's mastery of her was keener and more thorough. One of the cutting speeches she was growing familiar with from him would kill her now she thought. When she heard the door open, she put her hand over her mouth, not to scream.



"Thyra!" he said, very gently.

She still did not dare to speak. He sat down by the bed, put out his hand and let it rest lightly on her hair.

"Thyra, darling, you mustn't be afraid of me. I won't be unkind to you any more. I can't do without you; if I say so, you mustn't believe me; you must only believe I really love you."

Had she ever heard his voice so soft, so pleading, so loving? even in the best of his acting? or even when—oh, should she never escape those recollections and the disgrace in them?

"I don't deserve to live," she said.

"Thyra, if you die, I shall have murdered you; so you will live now, won't you, to save me from that?"

She began to sob and cry; not as Grace would have, for greater pain, but for mere relief from the tension of her former terror. He held her hands and stroked her hair, calling her every tender name he could think of.

Meanwhile Felix had gone down to see if the late train had brought him any acquaintances. He wanted the rest of looking on a familiar face, if possible, before entering on the night that he foreboded.

As he came into the large parlor where most of the guests were gathered, a well-known figure unexpectedly



rose to meet him, saying with a pleasant voice and cordial tone,

“You’ve not forgotten me, Doctor Belden?”

“Why, Miss Pringle!” he answered.

“The ‘spoilt child, Miss Pringle,’ as the Norton boys used to call me? Yes and no, Doctor. I am Mrs. Tony Waveney now, and here is my husband to spoil me instead of my sister. Tony, here’s an old friend from California for us.”

“One I remember on this side too, before I came into all my feet and inches,” answered the husband in as friendly a tone as hers. “Come, Doctor, ‘let’s pre-empt that corner, and have a big talk,’ as Ina would say.”

They moved aside, out of the stream of conversation flowing round the other new arrivals, who were making large stories out of the small accident. Everybody had dined, the storm had settled into a drizzle, and the troubles of the evening were giving place to a general feeling of comfort.

Tony Waveney was very like Tyne in appearance, with his marked though plain features and distinguished air; but he had, and was likely to keep long, the look of youth which his uncle had early lost. An easier, simpler, more unpractical fellow than Tony never got through the world; even his vigorous sense of humor did not make him suspicious or prudent. His true aid and balance was



not in himself, but in the little woman at his side. Ina (she had been sentimentally christened Malvina, but she hardly knew it herself, much less her friends, accustomed to the pretty shorter substitute) was not at all of the slim type common to the daughters of new settlements. Her figure, though it showed a fine healthy physique, lacked a good deal of being graceful, inclining rather to the short, stocky, solid type of the Roman women. But like them, she had a clear dark skin and a fine head with abundant black hair and large black eyes. Nor were those eyes of the common Italian unexpressive variety; such living and feeling ones would have befitted a patriot soul, whose men had had her hearty good-bye when they went with Garibaldi to fight the French in '49, or her quick-witted aid when, the cause being lost, they must retreat with him. Ina's fate had not given her so severe an experience; but it had demanded both energy and patience of her, and had not found her wanting. She had known trials in her girlhood, and borne them cheerfully; her marriage was bringing her into unaccustomed circumstances, but she would take her new life in hand from its best side. Her practical nature dealt easily with details which perplexed her husband, while her love for him kept her from being disturbed at his want of business-like ways and abilities. Seeing her skill in affairs and her matronly



looks, some people fancied her the elder; but in reality Tony counted two years more.

Felix had known Ina in San Francisco, as an orphan cared for by her married sister; the pet of the household, but scarcely deserving the name some of her acquaintance had given her. The brother-in-law, an amiable, lively, extravagant man, invested nearly all he had in mines; his income therefore underwent constant ups and downs, the effects of which it took all the care and good sense of Ina and Nelly to moderate. For nearly two years the family had lived abroad, and Felix had thus lost sight of them, not even knowing of Ina's marriage. There had never been any sentimental feeling between the Doctor and the young girl; they liked each other, but Ina thought him too grave, and he found her (preoccupied as he was with Grace) lacking in charm. Still he was always glad to meet her, particularly just now. This healthy contrast to the impression of the Sundons' affair was the relief he needed. Besides, as Waveney belonged to the same theatrical company as Sundon, some information might be had which would be much to the purpose. Felix felt uncertain of understanding Harry; and yet Thyra's life perhaps was to depend on the judgment he made.

Meanwhile Ina was talking:

"It seemed very natural you should call me Miss



Pringle, Doctor; I have hardly got the habit of writing 'Ina Waveney' yet, though it is a real change for the better; just as it always bothered me to put the fresh dates in my letters after every New Year's Day."

"You have not been married long?"

"Not a fortnight. But we were engaged a year,—and such an everlasting one, because I had to stay on the wrong side of the sea."

"That's well over now, though," said Waveney; "here we are on our wedding trip. I should have liked a quieter place, but everywhere we have tried to go there's the same crowd; and then here we find friends,—yourself, and Sundon, who Start tells me came this morning. I thought he was at Newport still. Did you ever know him?"

"Our acquaintance has just begun."

"Where is he?"

"His wife is ill, and he cannot leave her. I don't think you will see him to-night."

"Oh, I can wait. I'm sorry for Mrs. Sundon; she doesn't look as if she could stand much."

"What do you make of her husband?"

"Don't you like him? Oh, I see; he's been drinking. It's too bad. There never was a man that one could more truly call 'not himself' in that case. All the same he's my best friend, and I owe him everything."



“Yes, I’m sure no thanks could be too much from us to him,” said Ina. “Tell how it all happened, Tony.”

“I may as well begin at the beginning, then, Doctor, if you care to hear.”

“Indeed I do care.”

“My father, you see, having been a distinguished graduate of a German School of Mines insisted that I should follow in his footsteps; a very good idea, but for the one trifling fact, that he and I are too unlike for our successes to ever be the same. When my uncle Mont came out to me, I had already begun to understand that I was in the wrong place, and hinted as much to him. ‘What else would you like to do?’ he asked. I didn’t quite know. He persuaded me to keep on a little longer, and a little longer, he living meanwhile in the same dull town and making it as bright for me as he could. But after two years he owned I was right. Then he said, ‘There’s no hurry; I’ve capital enough to start you in any business you like at any time you please; what you want now is a year’s travel, to see what people are like and how they live, and so be better able to choose your own work,—for you must have something to do; you’ll never be happy as an idler.’ We traveled, and two things came of it; I revived an old boyish hankering for the stage, and I met Ina.”

“Yes, and I must tell you where, Doctor,” she said; “it



was so appropriate to your eminently unromantic friend. In the elevator of the Charing Cross Hotel. We inspected each other from the ground floor to the fifth story, and our minds were made up when we reached the top, though we waited a while to declare them."

"I found no difference of opinion when I ventured on stating mine, though," said Waveney. "Next, I took my uncle into my confidence. My theatrical views seemed to disturb him a little. 'A not uncommon fancy of clever, young people,' he said; 'but there's a great deal to be thought of—you've no idea of the difficulties—we'll wait till my friend Sundon comes back from Australia, and consult him.' But about my engagement he never really raised a question. 'You are both rather young; but it's better so than to wait too long; besides, you'll have something worth living for now. We must go back to America and make a beginning at once.' So we sailed; but he died on the steamer. At least he never knew I was left without a cent."

Waveney paused, a restrained, but distinct look of still fresh suffering stealing over his face. Ina slid her hand into his.

"That was a hard time for you," said Felix.

"Not so bad as you think, though," Waveney went on, "for that's where Sundon comes in. When we were off Quarantine, and the passengers all out on



deck in their new clothes, and the sun shining, I couldn't stand it, but turned back into my stateroom. By and by I heard a knock, and looked up. There stood Sundon; he had come on with the health-officer, expecting to find my uncle. When I told him how things had gone with us, he fairly broke down. It makes you feel different to a man, once you've seen him with tears in his eyes, don't you know? and that was our introduction. After a while, he made me talk of myself; would hear all my fears and fancies, promised to start me in the world—and kept his word too. I owe him every engagement I've had. As soon as I could, I let Ina know my plans, and told her she was free to take no more interest in them—”

“As if you hadn't made yourself a hero of romance by those new fortunes! With such added attractions, of course I was not ready to let him go.”

“Still we didn't see our way ahead much. But while we were living on letters, my present brother-in-law, then only possibly so, was getting up one of his periodical trees, with the prospect of staying longer than usual at that height. The ‘Grasshopper Outfit’ wouldn't output, and was an unquestionable burden. So one fine day Ina writes me that she must do something too, and will return to her native land as companion of an elderly Miss Briggs, who is tired of living alone. We there-



fore plan a meeting in New York. In the interval of the voyage Miss Briggs is persuaded by an old flame, unexpectedly met on the steamer, to fix their wedding-day for the first convenient time after coming to shore; Ina's occupation being gone, what is left us but to follow Miss Briggs's example? Of course my great-aunt thinks it a shocking imprudence; but the Pringles don't object, and Sundon says I can afford it, as I am sure to get on."

Felix had made a different decision for himself, and meant to keep to it; but it was not in his heart to say less than, "I do believe you are right."

"And now," said Ina, "the Grasshopper Outfit begins to 'boom' and Bob and Nellie threaten me with all sorts of wonderful wedding presents. It comes to the same thing in the end. When a girl marries a rich man, he leaves her always a poor widow, who must help half the family connection out of a tiny salary as extra clerk in some Department in Washington. I'm not so ambitious!"

"But as for Sundon," Waveney began. "I really think—to be sure there are old stories—still—"

He broke off; he had not really considered before how this old friendship would be affected by his marriage, and whether, in spite of its claims on him, his wife ought to be brought in contact with it. But the moment he



paused, Ina spoke up: "Is Mrs. Sundon seriously ill, Doctor?"

"The chances are against her. I am afraid of brain-fever."

"Has she any friends in the house?"

"No one."

"If there's anything I can do for her, count upon me. It's inhuman to stand off when people are too sick to help themselves. I mean what I say."

"I may need you, though I hope not."

"It's no such great thing. If you want me, I'm ready."

By morning Ina was indeed required to fulfill her offer.

"Mrs. Sundon is just in that state when one must if possible do what a patient wishes," Felix said, "and she begs to see some woman's face. These stupid servant-girls would be worse than nobody. I shall get a nurse for her as soon as I can; meanwhile—"

"Here I am, as I promised you."

"With your aid, we may tide over the day quietly, though I cannot be certain. Her husband has done the best he could, and twice as much as I expected of him; but we must have other help now."

When she saw Harry, Ina thought he himself looked like another patient. "I hoped to have welcomed Tony's



wife more as one should a bride," he began, "but you see—"

He broke off; for Thyra, lying with her hands pressed over her eyes, asked in a strange dull voice, "Doctor, who did you find? I can't have any one coming here that I know."

"We have never met, Mrs. Sundon," said Ina.

"But you'll say afterwards they brought you on false pretenses, when you hear the whole story."

"No, I have heard."

Thyra uncovered her eyes, and studied the new-comer.

"I like your looks," she said. "You're not always thinking about them. Are you married?"

"Yes."

"Of course, or they wouldn't have let you come. Or perhaps you're a widow? Sometimes I wish I was."

Harry's face worked uneasily. He had withdrawn out of Thyra's sight, but kept watching her.

"No, my husband is alive."

"You don't seem to mind that. Who is he?"

"Mr. Waveney."

"He always was very civil to me. I hope he's good to you."

"Nobody could be better."

"I'm so tired of men! I see nothing else. You're a great comfort and a great variety. They're a good



deal alike after all; and they're hard, and rough, and sharp. Tell me any woman can be so cutting! But you know them. Perhaps you can tell me what to do when they're bad to one; I've tried and tried, and I can't get even with them. Not now though; I'm too tired. Suppose we don't talk any more. I used to like talking, but that was before people made fun of everything I said. You haven't laughed at me once since you came in; I like that. Harry's always laughing at me. He's doing it now."

Nothing could have been graver, not to say sadder, than Sundon's face.

"You think he isn't," Thyra went on, "don't you?"

"I'm sure he isn't," Ina answered.

"You don't know him. Did you never read about witches when you were a little girl? He's one. There's nothing they can't do. He isn't really there; he's having a good time in some other place; he leaves his shadow behind to laugh at me; but he's not really there; no, no!" with a long sob.

At this, Harry came forward and caught his wife's hand. "Thyra, I am here; I couldn't laugh, and you crying; I couldn't amuse myself, and you in pain."

"Do you think he's making believe?" asked Thyra of Ina.

"No," Ina answered. "It's all true."



“Well, Harry, since you say so— Now don’t, you’ll hurt me; you squeezed my ring into my finger once— isn’t there a scar?” There was not. “Now go away, and let me talk to this lady. I’ve a great deal to tell her; what you call women’s trash, about dresses and things; you won’t want to hear. Is he gone? Come back; I want to say—what was it? I forget.”

Through the day Thyra would not let Ina leave her. By night, however, she knew no one any longer. For days she remained in a state to alarm the watchers to the utmost for her; for weeks, even after the balance had dipped in her favor, and it was plain she would neither die nor go mad, she still was wretchedly feeble and helpless. The nurse turned out a very good one; but once the worst was over, there was much Ina could do, and she did not spare herself.

Felix saw Thyra out of danger, before he returned to San Francisco; he could not wait for her complete recovery, as that bid fair to take months, or even years; but he did not go till he assured himself that Harry understood the gravity of the matter. Whether he would continue to be the devoted husband as long as there was need of it, was still beyond the Doctor’s power not to doubt; but one might reasonably hope for the best. One conversation between the two men had certainly pointed that way, and was encouraging otherwise.



"You have made yourself loyal and unsuspecting friends in the Waveneys," Felix said.

"Do you think I shall lose them?" Harry asked.

"I hope you know how to keep them."

"You don't think I could mean anything unfair to that boy and girl, do you? Such a couple have a right to the best treatment from the world; and if the world don't do its duty by them, anyhow I will."

"I believe you; and elsewhere too."

"But don't you think Thyra is better?"

"Yes; but her life is still in your hands, and may be so for a long time to come."

"I'll remember."

Felix gave Florence a brief account only of his lengthened absence, which in Florence's letter to Grace became in turn little more than news of the Waveneys; still there was enough to make Grace annoyed that her friends should be involved with the Sundons. She wondered also if anything could have been said of her; but she would not ask. She had no reason however to fear. Waveney knew her so little that he did not happen to speak of her to Felix; and Felix, having really more news of her from Florence than Tony could command, had no cause to question him. Besides, the Doctor wished to keep that image undisturbed by his present surroundings. It was bad enough to have heard that speech of Sundon's; impudent fiction of



a tipsy fancy as it must be, it implied some former acquaintance, some inexplicable carelessness or folly of Tyne's that had allowed the two to meet. But of course there was no question what part Grace must have taken.

Harry bid Felix good-bye with a mixture of emotions; gratitude for his saving Thyra, good feeling for his having shown himself an understanding friend, and relief at escaping from so keen a judgment exercised from a standpoint so different from one's own. "The Doctor's rather too much for me," he thought; "still I should like to see more of him. He's a good fellow in his quiet way; and a man, notwithstanding his youth was crushed out of him so, poor soul. Yet if ever he crosses my path again, it will be unlucky for me somehow—Bosh! I mustn't be getting superstitious."



## CHAPTER XII.

FOUR years more, and some months, have passed since Felix Belden turned his face again towards California. It is a bright Saturday afternoon in New York; cold and windy indeed out of doors, since January reigns, but warm and sheltered in the theaters, where the *matinées* are going on at this hour.

We once had reason, the old playgoers say, to compare our actors to the famous cook who refused to show her art in its perfection when there were "only ladies" in the family where she served. But these veterans now confess that the afternoon audiences do not find themselves neglected because they are largely feminine and apt to be timid in the matter of applause. In the way of numbers certainly they are not trifling. All around New York, Saturday is the great occasion, one might call it the festival, of the suburban woman. She comes in by ferry or train in the morning, meeting her neighbors on the way and having a bit of chat with them; she shops till lunch-time,—and shopping may be made very



pleasant;—she lunches, now with a town-dwelling friend, now at some satisfactory restaurant; she has her stroll in those Broadway neighborhoods, where one's eyes turn from the gay and varied crowd to the shop-windows and back, amused and brightened; and then her matinée, in a theater, light, bright, fresh-looking, comfortable, easy to get in and out of (how easy one does not appreciate except by ventures in the bewildering labyrinths which lead to orchestra chairs and balconies abroad, specially in London); where (unless at the opera) she does not feel that she has paid too much; and where she may take her daughter, and does.

Benson's company appear to-day in a piece which seems likely to have a long run, from its many good qualities. Sundon and Waveney both have important parts in it, though Sundon's is the best.

Some of Waveney's acquaintance wondered that he was willing to play second to Sundon; but Waveney knew well enough that a rivalry between them would only tell against himself, and that Harry's neighborhood gave him often opportunities that one might fail of with an inferior companion. His own range was not a wide one. He could play his own part (a thing all the world has not the gift of doing, by the way, either on or off the stage), of an easy gentlemanly young fellow; he had besides a marked success in anything requiring gro-



tesque but wholesome humor; but powerful, impassioned, or pathetic effects were beyond him at present. The weight of the pieces would come upon Harry, and he carried it as if it were nothing. He was certain of popular favor, and the assurance did not spoil him; he was too thorough an artist now to be swayed from his course by praise or blame that did not tally with his own convictions, no matter how keenly he enjoyed appreciation or suffered from misconception. All this had been a gradual and continuous growth, uninterrupted since first he set foot on the stage. Outside of his profession, however, his life had undergone a great change since his encounter with Felix Belden.

Thyra's illness had left her with broken health for a long time, as Felix had predicted. She had needed constant, patient, loving care, and she had had it. In the beginning this had been rather perforce with Harry; but he had made himself serve her till it grew easy. After all, he thought, what else had he to give his spare time to? If she were a foolish child, grown people owe something to children, and it is unfair to be unkind to the poor things. She had been very near death through him; now he had that rare thing, a chance of undoing a work done amiss. At first she had tried him a good deal, but even then her frightened efforts not to vex him were so pathetic that his irritation seemed inhu-



man, confronted with them. By degrees he grew to feel her no trouble, and at length to be fond of her in a new way. His old passion for her was gone, and a real sympathetic union of themselves was hardly to be expected; but he had a great tenderness for the helpless creature so entirely dependent on him, and could not bear to do anything that should disturb ever so little the rooted trust she now showed in him. So it was that Harry Sundon became a domestic man.

This state of life was no unhappy one, especially to a man who, where not led by professional ambition, never looked ahead, but lived on day by day. If he thought of the future, as one will when one begins to grow older (he was full forty now), he foresaw no change. Probably he would outlast Thyra; but he meant to keep her in this world as long as possible. He had no fears for her to-day; during the last half-year, his devotion had been rewarded by a great improvement in her health; she declared that "she felt as well as anybody, and could do as much, if she had it to do"—which he took care she did not.

The past was little less present with Harry than the future. He thought occasionally of Tyne, much as he remembered the more distant image of his father; those two, who had been interested in his fortunes when their own were so waning, were not to be for-



gotten. But there was another figure which he first had driven from his mind, and then had thought it vanished of itself. He believed it quite effaced; what was his surprise on that Saturday to rediscover it clear and distinct!

"I expect a critic this afternoon who will worry me a bit," said Waveney, as they were walking over to the theater together. (They lived in the same apartment house, the Sundons on the second floor, the Waveneys on the third. Ina was Thyra's friend, in the same way as she had been; and considering Mrs. Sundon's invalid condition and secluded life, the world did not take it much amiss.)

"Why, who, Tony? You ought to be hardened to every kind of public by this time."

"My cousin, Grace Delahay, who knows more than most people."

"The lady from Texas?"

Grace did not correspond with the Waveneys, and they knew little of her; but now and then, in the course of these four years, her name had been mentioned, and Harry had gathered that she was still with the Romaines at San Antonio. He had never given the Waveneys any hint of his former acquaintance with her, nor, he believed,—and rightly,—had Thyra.

"Not from Texas any longer," was the answer. "The



Romaines are stationed in Washington now. The daughter—a pretty little pet of sixteen or so; I'd like one of my girls to grow up in that style—is here on a visit to her grandmother, the handsome old lady who's just moved into the house opposite us with the high steps; and they sent Grace on with her pupil, to give them both a vacation. I met her in the street a day or two ago, the first I knew of her being in town. She wrote me such a lovely letter when my uncle Mont died, I ought not to have lost sight of her; but I'm no correspondent. Ina and I went over yesterday to see her, and of course Ina was full of the play. So they declared they should be there, and you'll see them. I wish I could learn your trick of looking all round the house and never getting out or losing yourself; I shall have to take their coming for granted."

"How shall I know your cousin?"

"Brown hair and eyes, rather tall, graceful—but you saw her photograph I think; Ina had it on the mantelpiece in that little painted frame. She's prettier, but it's a likeness; she gave it to Ina yesterday."

"Yes, I saw it." This was a fib, for Harry had not noticed it at all; to be sure it had been covered up by another picture leaning against it, one that Waveney took great pride in, of his two girls.

"Grace is a much more attractive woman than when



I remember her first," Waveney went on. "I used to think her sharp and thin, not to say angular; but she has softened and filled out, till she is really charming in every way. I'd like to be sure that she won't set me down third-rate. You are safe, even if she hadn't seen you before, which she has. She spoke of you with quite a touch of enthusiasm."

Harry changed the subject; he wanted—why, he could not tell—to hear more, but was afraid of showing an interest inconsistent with the appearance of knowing nothing of its cause. He wondered notwithstanding what attitude Grace would take towards him and Thyra; for in the position of all three in regard to the Waveneys, something must inevitably be said or done. Whatever it was, under the circumstances, it would be only fair to bear her out in it. It would be impossible to expect Ina's kindness; she who treated Thyra as if she had had no past, as far as Thyra, who dreaded compromising such a friend, would allow. Still Grace, in spite of that one moment on the steamer, was not a woman to show her feelings. What he seriously dreaded, however, was a misunderstanding that should make Grace believe it right to try and bring about a coolness between himself and the Waveneys. He saw too plainly the theory of him that she was likely to hold; and how could he convince her in time that it was now a mistaken one? He



had always thought of Ina as a cherished younger sister; if Grace were to make her suspicious of him—cause Thyra to lose her one friend!— And it would be his own fault if that happened, too.

Meanwhile all was not tranquil at the theater; Benson had an anxiety, which he took the first chance of confiding to the two actors.

“We’re only too likely to have a panic this afternoon. It’s in the air. After last week at —— and last night at —— houses are getting awfully skittish. The play’s against us just now. The end of the second act leaves people all wrought up, and there’s no letting ’em down easier without spoiling the effect and making the papers say we’re falling off and getting flat. Then if a pin drops between the acts, they’ll all jump and rush. And even if we tide over that, the third act—something’s sure to happen there unless you two can fix it. You begin it together; I depend upon you. I daren’t speak to anybody else, for if we don’t keep all as cool as cool, the house’ll nose it out.”

Sundon laughed; he did not believe much in Benson’s alarms, and knew himself ready for accidents. Waveney took it less lightly, but it did not weigh hard on him either.

When Harry came on, he had forgotten about Grace; but all at once he caught sight of her. How she had



changed for the better, to be sure! Tyne was right in his prophecy that she would grow more charming with years. The pretty little schoolgirl at her side, to whom she turned and spoke in that winning way, was not to compare with her. She showed a completeness, a composure that yet was full of promise of quick feeling, that he had not expected.

By the time these observations were made, he became conscious that Grace was studying him too; whether for his acting alone, or with regard to himself besides, he could not tell, though he feared he could not escape the last. It was a relief that he did not play the villain of the piece this time; she would probably believe he represented such characters *con amore*. Was the revulsion of their last meeting as powerful as ever with her? Suppose they encountered each other by accident at the Waveneys, would she treat him so again? At least he would meet her differently; nothing in the world should make him seem familiar now. Oh, this was ridiculous; what did it matter, if she did not choose to forgive him like other people? But then who, after Lang and Thyra, had so much to forgive?

These flickering secret flames of thought came and went, but made no impression on his acting any more than Benson's worries; unless he might feel something of the irritation Grace's presence used to cause him,



coming now not as a contradiction, but as a spur. Certainly he was at his best to-day. People who often saw him play declared he was never mechanical and never did exactly the same thing twice; this afternoon they noted variations which were all improvements.

The second act reached its stirring close, the curtain fell. Benson's fears at first seemed not likely to be justified; but as the curtain began to rise again—which it did on an empty scene, where the performers were to enter singly—two or three people got up and went slowly out; then two or three more, with quicker steps. At that the heads of the audience turned away from the stage and towards the doors; some bent together with a whispered "Don't you smell smoke?" then all at once, with an alarmed buzz and rustle, the whole house was on its feet. An outward push was beginning in the crowd, but it stopped short as Benson came out to the foot-lights.

"Ladies and gentlemen, nothing's the matter, I assure you positively; please sit down."

Somehow the audience were not quite ready to believe Benson; his important coolness had unconsciously an air of being put on. The stir was checked for the moment, indeed; calls of "sit down" echoed through the house, and the front rows began to settle themselves quietly; but many people farther back were still standing, and



some jumped up again in the second between Benson's going aside and Harry Sundon's stepping forward. Harry was to begin the scene with a phrase of soliloquy; now, taking his easy tone with the deprecatory touch in it, he added this preface:

"Ladies and gentlemen, after Mr. Benson's assurance, the only reason that could lose us your support would be that we are boring you; now I do not think we have treated you so unfairly as that, and I believe you will bear me out in my conviction."

Thereupon, as required by the play, he turned to address Waveney, who then entered. He could scarcely hear the sound of his own voice for the applause that rang out to answer him; and by the time Waveney's speech began, the crowd was listening without thought of further alarm.

"I wonder," said Waveney, when they were behind the scenes again, "how Grace took it. I didn't dare look round much, for if I had got out, it might have spoilt everything after all."

"Then you didn't see?"

"Did you?"

"Yes. Miss Delahay—isn't that her name?—sat still and looked as if nothing was the matter really. The pretty schoolgirl squeezed her hand once, turned pale and stared about, but kept in her place."



“Little Miss Helen has plenty of pluck; her father’s own child.”

“Just so; I’ve heard of the Major in my own time. But if the old lady’s his mother, it’s a pity she’s not more like him. His daring in the war upset her nerves once for all, maybe; anyhow, she was on her feet, and all but out into the aisle, when Miss Delahay turned and spoke to her, quick but steady, took hold of her, and drew her back again. With that that whole row and more subsided. It made things a deal easier for you and me. Miss Delahay ought to have a vote of thanks from the whole house, by rights. You must make her our compliments, anyway.”

As soon as he could get away, Waveney went home to see that his wife and Thyra had heard no exaggerated story of the panic; Sundon was detained on business, but one could easily answer for both. When he came to his own door, there was Grace ahead of him, on the same errand.

“I won’t come in, since you are here,” she said. “I am due at Mrs. Romaine’s; we have dinner company. Tell Ina I will come to-morrow.”

“Good-bye then, you best of aids; if you hadn’t done your part as moderator, I should have a story to tell, instead of getting it nicely spoilt; you have the thanks of all of us, and more when we meet again.”



“I!” she laughed as she went.

Grace had named no time, but Ina somehow understood she should not see her till late in the Sunday afternoon. Instead, Grace made her appearance quite early. Now Ina was expecting Harry and Thyra, who had a way of looking in at the Waveneys’ for a few minutes before their Sunday afternoon walk. This was embarrassing: the conversation at the Romaines’ concerning Harry had only taken his professional qualities into account, and no mention had been made of Thyra at all. Helen Romaine’s presence had been a check on discussion, such as Ina felt she ought to have with Grace before venturing to bring her in contact with the Sundons. Yet this new kinswoman seemed of all people the one with whom a matter of scandal were most unsuitable to talk over. Besides, Ina feared Grace would disapprove her own conduct; and though she should not change it for that, the idea hurt her. Still she got up her courage to say at once,

“Grace, you may happen to meet the Sundons here; unless you tell me immediately you wish not, and then perhaps I can manage to prevent it. You mayn’t know, but their marriage was a scandal. Still I can assure you, ever since Thyra has been Mr. Sundon’s wife, she has been perfectly well conducted; she has suffered a great deal and is sincerely penitent, I do believe—”

With that there was a timid knock at the door.



"There she is!" said Ina.

"Tell her to come in," said Grace.

"Come in!" Ina called.

Thyra, advancing with a smile for her hostess, drew back again, flushing, stumbling, with hardly breath to exclaim, "Why, it is you!" as Grace rose.

Ina had no reason to be alarmed. Grace saw Thyra, worn and faded still in spite of partial recovery, and painfully shy and uncertain in manner instead of inconsiderately open. She did not stop to ask if this unhappy self-consciousness were shown towards the world or only towards the one that knew most; she went to Thyra, holding out both her hands.

"Yes, it is I; you are not mistaken; I am glad to be not forgotten."

"Oh, I oughtn't to speak to you again—I'm not fit to come near you since—"

"If Ina receives you, should not that be enough for me? In all these years she must know you better than I."

Thyra could not speak. Grace and Ina made her sit down between them.

"You two are too good to me," she murmured at last; "I don't know what to do." Then to Grace: "Are you going to stay long in town? You mustn't come to see me, or I to see you; Mrs. Romaine wouldn't like it, and it might make you trouble. But I shall see



you here sometimes. You're not changed at all, but I— Don't say anything, or I shall get crying, and I shan't be fit to go out— Who's that now?"

"Only Tony," said Ina.

Tony it was; but Harry Sundon also with him. Grace had no time to prepare herself before her cousin, looking quickly round and thinking he understood matters, introduced his companion.

There was no escape; but, to Harry at least, none seemed needed. Grace bowed, and said "very happy to meet you," which if it meant nothing, at least proved she was not going to cut him this time. He answered, "Ah, it is you, Miss Delahay, that we have to thank for your help yesterday afternoon; I saw what an admirable influence you have over those about you."

"Your own reaches much farther; if you praise mine, yours deserves much more from us."

This was said not as one makes a compliment, yet not unwillingly. The conversation then became general, and dealt with trifles, though in a half-serious tone. Soon Harry declared that Thyra must have her walk before the sun sank any lower; and they took their leave. He would rather have outstaid Grace, but thought it not best.

Grace gave a long sigh when they were out of hearing; before the Waveney she would not put her mingled feel-



ings into words. In their presence and poor Thyra's, she had not felt able to take up the position towards Harry she had held at their last meeting. Once the change was made, the conviction dawned on her that Tyne had judged the case more justly than she. Besides, was there not some difference in Harry? To-day he seemed really like a gentleman, not as if he only played that part when he fancied it. But now Ina was saying, "So you used to know her? How small the world is! What was she like then?"

"A pretty child," said Grace. "Poor thing! Helen Romaine is twice the woman already that she was in those days."

"You never knew Sundon, I suppose?" asked Wave-ney; a question Grace was glad to hear. She had dreaded Harry's version of their acquaintance; that he had made none was reassuring.

"I have met him sometimes," she admitted. "Your uncle and Mr. Sundon were great friends, and they were together constantly before poor Mont went abroad. But I did not think he would remember me. By the way, how does he treat his wife?"

"There couldn't be a better husband," said Ina warmly. "If people say anything to the contrary, it's only one of those stories they're always making up about all of us. If there are any other people that the world talks more of



and knows less of than actors and actresses, I should like to know it."

"It's possible, to be sure, between ourselves," Tony allowed, "that he mayn't have been always quite as devoted, before that fever she had, when Ina and Doctor Belden helped take care of her; but since—"

"Do you know Doctor Belden too?" Grace could not keep herself from interrupting. "Florence wrote me something—how was it?"

"Don't we?" answered Ina. "Why, he was one of my California friends. One of the best and cleverest men that ever lived. It's a shame he don't get along faster, but he will yet. He's had so much to pull him back; he has even tried to pay off his father's debts. To be sure the Ensors, who were the chief creditors, wouldn't take a cent."

"So Florence says."

"They ought to be generous, for since they came to San Francisco they are a hundred times better off than he is; people who can afford to keep such horses, and so many of them! Now about Mrs. Sundon, it happened this way—" and Ina told the story as far as she knew it; imperfectly enough, fortunately for her good opinion of Harry, for Felix had never enlightened her or any one as to the earlier part of it, and she believed the attempt at suicide a mere fiction of Thyra's delirium. The strong



point of this version, therefore, was Felix's admirable management of the case, which did not fail to interest her hearer.

Grace, through her correspondence with Florence, could know Felix always the same, as much to be believed in and relied on as at first; but this new testimony to his worth, given with a living voice, not the second-hand of pen and paper, lent her strong comfort, and even a sense of physical well-being and warmth, like a kindly fire on a winter's day. True, Ina had not seen him for several years, while the last mail had brought Grace a California letter; still this account of him seemed the freshest. She had felt on their first meeting that Ina and she were to be friends; but so much more was as unexpected as welcome. As for the Sundons, that should not interfere. Since it was plain that Sundon respected these transparent and genial natures, Grace would not disturb them; she would bury her recollections and just repulsions within herself, as long as he gave no cause for fresh disgust.

Meanwhile Thyra and Harry had been talking of her.

"I didn't think she would be there, or I wouldn't have gone," said Thyra; "but she was just the same to me as she used to be; and to you too."

"She may know how to forget; she certainly knows how to behave."



“I didn’t remember she was so pretty; prettier than she was before; she hasn’t gone off the way I have.”

“You’ll catch up to her yet, puss; you don’t know how much better you are looking this winter: people get so used to their own faces. I’ve only just found out how old and fat I am.”

“Nonsense, Harry, you’re nothing of the kind. You talk as if you were that man going round the corner there—” a grotesque ancient mountain of a German-born citizen, at whose appearance it was impossible not to be amused. Harry certainly was not boyish in figure or face, but he was far yet from such an age, and not likely to reach such ponderosity.

He met the Waveney’s again with some anxiety; but his keenest watchfulness could detect no change or coolness in their manner to him. The only thing that suggested an allusion to former days was a casual mention that Mrs. Bishop (with whom they were not on very good terms) was reported not to be pleased with Florida, where she was wintering.



## CHAPTER XIII.

HELEN ROMAINE had her own young companions, with whom she spent most of her time; so Grace, being free, saw a great deal of Ina. At the Waveney, she sometimes met the Sundons, though always in the same accidental way, and not markedly often. Thyra, if she came in, frequently slipped out, fearing to disturb the new friendship. Harry did not follow his wife's lead; Grace interested him too much, though in a fashion by no means a thorough pleasure. How well he should have liked it, to be able to meet such a charming woman as she was now, without any recollections between them; easily, as an agreeable stranger! Instead, he must feel a disposition to justify himself and a conviction that the effort was hopeless; an obligation to appear at his best, and a belief that it was no use. "As long as we live," he said to himself, "she will think me a shabby fellow." Yet once or twice, dwelling on some saying of hers, he imagined she might have forgiven him. To ask her directly if she had, though, he feared would



seem to her a fresh insult; and he could make no certain guess at her feelings, still screened from him by her old reserve. Had he really ever seen her without it? And even then— Would nothing ever happen to prove that she had any strong emotions of her own, not merely sympathy or repulsion towards others? Why he wanted to know that, he did not ask himself; but he was soon as eager to settle that question, as the other.

One day Ina was asking Grace what she thought of a great musician from abroad, who gave “piano recitals” that winter. Now music was the thing of all others in which Grace showed most interest. She played well herself; Harry had heard her long ago at Mrs. Bishop’s, and of late at the Waveney’s, though she was shy about it, for fear, he could see, of tiring an audience rather indifferent. He knew nothing of music himself; but he liked to watch her face when she was at the piano; she seemed a little off her guard then. Now, as she was describing to Ina what she had heard, it was plain it affected her strongly. Harry determined he would see if the musician did not make her drop her mask for once.

He carried out his plan, assuring himself of the time Grace would go, and of a seat where he could observe her without her noticing it. Thyra was to have accompanied him; nothing but Chopin’s music was to be



played, and though she had thought the other concerts were too "classical" in programme, she believed there were to be pretty waltzes and marches this once, that anybody could "understand." But she had a bad headache, and he went alone. He was there before Grace; but she came in soon with the Romaines and some other ladies to whom she was talking so busily that she looked his way without seeing him. In a few moments the concert began, and she was absorbed in the music.

Even without her, Harry thought, the occasion would not have been a dull one. The audience interested him, to begin with; it was peculiar. There were few men; the day, being early in the week, excluded with its business claims many of the Saturday afternoon people besides those who would not care to be present now. The tickets were a trifle high-priced; and though there appeared a strong force of young girls and women costumed with the painful care which tells of small means,—Harry, who was much better off, felt some compunction, thinking how they must have saved out of their earnings to pay for their seats and the scores, the leaves of which they turned so cautiously, to avoid the distracting rustle of an opera libretto,—the majority was one of handsomely-dressed and well-dressed women; not vulgar show, but absolute elegance prevailing. At first Harry supposed these had come for the fashion of



the thing; but he soon read his mistake in their faces. Many of them he had seen before, with their street look of intelligence and readiness for life. Now the keen feeling hidden under thought, the fine nervous emotions, inclining to sadness, but full of tremulous pleasure, stole forth in those delicate lips, in those brilliant eyes. Not such strong and lively excitement, perhaps, as he could cause in his own audiences; but something subtle and fine-strained, suggesting an unknown world; the sight of such sentiment was in itself a new experience.

Harry had been inclined at first to laugh at the musician who wrought this spell; he was such a singular being, with his odd face—fine in effect, but irregular and unusual in detail—framed in a mane of long dusky hair that he shook back when he made that queer bow, the motion of which was like a wild creature's stretching itself, and his strange walk, setting his feet down flat as the bears do. In fiery passages he swayed and trembled violently all over, and clawed the piano as if he would tear out the strings. But when that everyday instrument, from which most people expect no marvels, yielded under his hand sounds so inexplicably beautiful and of such inexplicable influence over his hearers, the man was too powerful to be absurd. Here was something to be recognized as a great and genuine force. Even when, in his resting-times, he stood by the piano, half turning away from his audience, and



looking up at the ceiling in a weary excitement, it was too natural an attitude to call for the blame of affectation.

All this, however, Harry noticed only by the way. Grace was his main study. She was at her best in every detail of costume and appearance. Her dress was of that dark wine-red which becomes almost every woman, but her wearing it made it seem to him as if no other had a right to it but she; her bonnet had feathers of soft white and gray shades emphasizing "the sweet brownness of her eyes" and hair. Those eyes now sparkled, now grew dim; once she put her handkerchief to them, after a tender thrilling strain, full of regrets and longings. Her lips were set a moment, then parted when a stirring cry, a melody of fire, rang out from the keys, as if she too had uttered it. Her color went and came; she made no effort to control her face or hide her emotions. This did not make her singular among the women about her; they were all in the same case. What was special to her was a certain rapt expression, the music seeming to lift her out of herself into another region. Sometimes there was a far-off look in her eyes, as if she saw some image beyond the range of actual vision; again they shone strangely, as if the imagined creature unknown to others had come up close at hand with a kindly greeting. Once she caught Harry's glance, and bowed absently; his fears that she should think him impudently staring were dispelled, but on the other hand he



had an annoying sense of being neglected; then he was angry with himself for a conceited fellow; and then he forgot everything but watching her.

When the concert was over,—whether it had been long or short, he could not tell,—he rose as she did; but then he drew back and waited till there was no chance of his re-joining her. He had discovered more than he expected or wished,—not concerning her, but himself.

“Well, how did you like it?” said Thyra, when he came home. “Was it stupid, or was it nice?”

“Neither; it was wonderful. I don’t think I ever heard a piano before; and now I never want to hear another, for nobody can make it the same thing as this man.”

Yet he knew the impression of the music and the musician would grow dim with him; while that other, the one not to be spoken, he feared might remain.



## CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning, as Harry left the house, going to a rehearsal, he saw Grace walking along the street just in front of him. He came up with her as she stopped to post a letter in a corner box,—one of those missives to Florence that Felix would see; but Harry knew nothing of that. She was alone, and some isolating atmosphere seemed to encircle her. Yet the sense of remoteness he felt was a relief to him. Yesterday she had unconsciously started him on a train of thought he knew to be dangerous. Long ago he had discovered that the generalization about duties steadily performed becoming pleasures and second nature through habit had a much less universal application than the common run of theorists believe, and that quite as often the converse took place; the spirit, compelled by circumstances into action alien to it, heaping up impulses of resistance which, once strong enough, broke out in some revenge on itself or others. To a man of his temperament, this last looked much the most likely result



of the two. Notwithstanding, he had never applied it to his own case before; and even now he was struggling against his interpretation of it. But there was Grace, and their ways were in the same direction for a few streets; if it had not been so, would he not have changed his, no matter how cold she seemed?

How was it too that soon they came to speak of Tyne, who had not been mentioned between them on any former meeting? He must have begun it, but she had not avoided it. They had turned into a cross-street all of dwelling-houses, where at that hour there was scarcely a passer-by; certainly no one near when he found himself saying:

“I never had such a friend; he understood me better than I do myself; and if I had done what he meant for me I should be more of a man than I am now. I should have loved you.”

A speech worse than mistaken! He saw her harden as once he had seen her before. “You do not change!” she said.

“Don’t misunderstand!” he answered, appealingly; it was not the same case he was pleading now, indeed. “It’s only too natural that you should; I have given you reason enough formerly for you to think I could insult you; but I cannot, for all that. You go away—to-morrow, is it? I don’t know when I shall see you again.



Might you not forgive my betraying an enthusiasm for you that expects nothing?"

"If you wish to keep it so, we had better bid good-bye at once." She was not ungentle, yet there was a decision in her manner that hurt him cruelly. "I go to-morrow; that is my part, and I believe you know yours. Good-bye." They had come to an avenue; she turned up it, while his road lay down it. The bright winter sun shone for both, but with a difference.

He was rather snappish at rehearsal; Benson wondered if he had been drinking again; but by the time he reached home he had recovered his temper.

"Grace Delahay has been over to bid Ina good-bye," Thyra said when he came in. "I'm sorry to have her go."

"Don't you feel well?" said he, resolutely putting that other image aside. "You don't look as bright as you can most days."

"Oh, I'm well enough."

On the morrow, when he was again coming home, he thought there would be no harm in knowing if Grace really had left town. He rang at Mrs. Romaine's door and inquired of the servant. Yes, Miss Delahay and Miss Romaine had started for Washington that morning. He went into his own home with a blank feeling.

Thyra was sitting by the fire, with the photograph of



the little Waveney girls, which their mother had given her, in her hand; she was studying it more intently than she often did anything.

“A pretty picture that is,” said he, taking a chair beside her; “much better than those things generally.”

“They are so pretty themselves,” Thyra said. “I wish either of them was ours. Do you think,” shyly, “you’d like that?”

“Why shouldn’t I? But Madam Ina might object.”

“But—such a one of our own—it’s possible—it’s more than possible—it’s likely to be.”

“There’s something to think ahead about then, dear.”



## CHAPTER XV.

**I**F the every-day course of Harry's life had been a moment disturbed to his eyes, it now seemed more fixed than ever. But who can guard against all accidents, or limit their results? A slip on the stairs, a trifling chill, may happen to anybody, and the consequence be unnoticeable, yet for Thyra this nothing meant too much; the loss of her child, then her own death.

Harry found himself alone in the world, at first with a bitter sense of want in having nothing left him of the clinging affection that had long been a part of his life; then rose up a feeling of freedom, which seemed inhuman to him, but irresistible. He might love Grace now without question. That thought, once it shaped itself, was always with him. No one suspected it; he had so much at stake that he grew very cautious. It would not do to move too fast; if he had been shocked at himself at first, how should he appear to Grace, if he spoke early? above all after those few words at their last meeting? So he waited, outwardly very quiet,



though many a day he felt as if the next must be the last of his silence.

The Romaines left Washington for the summer, going to the White Mountains; Grace was of their party. The Waveney's, during the hot weather, established themselves in a nook of the Maine coast; Harry joined them. At first the house at the beach was quite full, but as the summer began to wane, people thinned out. As soon as there was room, Ina undertook to carry out a long-cherished idea, and wrote to Grace, proposing that she should come and spend at least a week by the sea.

When Harry heard of this, he took alarm at once. "If she should refuse on my account! She will." He too wrote a letter, which went by the same mail as Ina's.

"I know beforehand how you will receive any word from me, with what a shrinking, a repulsion; I know my conduct has been too often fairly liable to the worst interpretations (though yet they would have been mistaken sometimes); and yet to-day I have to write, 'Do not stay away because I am here.' It pledges you to nothing, and it means everything to me. I cannot bear to have you draw back; if you will not come, I must follow my letter. Believe me, if Thyra had lived, I should never have troubled you; and I don't think even that I should have dared to ask you to be a mother to a child of hers; but now I have nothing left



me. Do not think of me as having wished for the chance of being free to love you; this once you would judge me too hardly. Think only that I do love you, and not as I ever loved before; for you are above all other women, and a different love is yours by right. This sounds hackneyed enough, but it is as real as the sunrise, an old story that is always new and that one's life depends on. I know you will not hear of this at once, if you do at all; still do not dismiss me at first and by letter. I cannot take a refusal in writing only, or now. But should you come, even then I only ask for time; I will say no more till you have seen that I am not what I was, and that you can forgive me the past."

He scribbled off this missive as fast as he could; he was not at all satisfied with it, but did not dare retouch it. "Suppose I did, and she thought I was playing off my old stage speeches with her!" There was nothing factitious about his feeling, he knew; then how horrible it would be if she imagined so!

In due time he had his answer.

"I cannot come, and it were best not. I do forgive you; but there can never be any love between us, believe me. So I will not torture you with a long argument; I will only say we had best not meet. This sounds hard, I know, but it is the only kind way for me."

There was a blot on the signature, beyond doubt a



tear. If Harry had only known for whom! but having no hint of that secret, he took it as suggesting hope, in spite of her words. "She distrusts me, but she doesn't hate me. Now I will go to her myself."

He had been reading his letter on the veranda of the house; Ina sat not far off, with a pile of correspondence. Suddenly she turned to him, exclaiming, "Now that is too bad! Grace isn't coming after all. Mrs. Bishop has been ill, and wants her, and she says she must go. Let me see? what's the date? she must be there now. If I could have written sooner, and caught her first! So provoking! I hope you have better news."

"Not so good as it might be. A business errand, that sends me down to New York to-morrow."

Early in the morning therefore Harry started. He had not been gone many hours, before in walked Felix, to Ina's great astonishment; for he had sent no word, and there was no reason to suppose him anywhere on this side of the continent. She happened to be alone; her husband and the children were on the beach, and she had not followed them at once, having stopt for a bit of mending about one of the little dresses, which if taken in time would not delay her two minutes.

"How well you look, Mrs. Waveney," Felix said; "this is perfect air. It is no wonder Grace Delahay joined you; is she with you yet?"



“Why, Doctor, she hasn’t been here, and isn’t coming! She is with Mrs. Bishop. I’m so disappointed.”

“Why, I met an old acquaintance of ours, a Mrs. Waters, who told me, that when she left here, you certainly expected Grace.”

“That stupid woman! She always gets everything wrong.”

“Have you seen Grace lately?” He ventured, with Ina, to use her name freely.

“Not since winter. She has not changed, only grown more charming, my husband says, who remembers her longer than I, you know. What a pity it is! here you have missed her and our friend Mr. Sundon into the bargain.”

She had not meant to say this, for she saw there was some storm in the air; but it slipped off her tongue in her embarrassment. Felix looked as if he had only just come on from San Francisco, and been traveling night and day; was it all for Grace? He enlightened her at once.

“Where has Sundon gone? To see her? That would be too much?”

“Good Heavens, Doctor, I never thought of that! I wonder if it could be so. He said he was going to town on business, but nothing more positive.”

“He’s impudent enough, if he fancied. How could you let them meet last winter?”



“What should I have done? It was accidental, and she made no objections afterwards. My husband’s best friend—a man that ever since I have known him has really been blameless—Doctor, you are not fair. Nothing that was said or done then could give any color to your idea. He never, since you remember him, faltered in his care for Thyra; and now she is dead,—why not, after all?”

“A man so hopelessly coarse-grained has no right to come near Grace.”

“You don’t do him justice. He is a gentleman at heart.”

“He couldn’t but show himself so to you; but to a wife—”

“He never drinks now; that was what spoiled him once. Anybody might trust him to-day.”

“Think of him and Grace together; does not it strike you as a discord?”

“As he is now, they might be in harmony yet.”

“Then at least they are not so now!”

“I don’t know; but I should think it would take him a good while to win her, if he can at all.”

“Have you talked to her about him? Does she understand him?” To himself: “For I believe you don’t.”

“She has always avoided discussing his past or his character. It may be only her dislike of scandal; such things seem to give her real pain to think or speak of. When I



have mentioned him to her, I could not help putting him in a favorable light, because truly I see him in one. She never tried to set me right with objections. But she never expressed any liking for him personally; only admired his acting."

"At least I must know for myself; I came East only to find out whom she could care for. When does the next train start? I have waited so long to speak that I am out of all patience now; excuse me if I am rough."

"Oh, how horribly stupid I am! I have been talking to you as if you only took a brotherly interest; just stabbing and wounding you! What shall I do?"

"Tell me the quickest way back to New York. It's no fault of yours, indeed."

"You must drive over to the Junction." He had walked up from the station near by. "I can find you a horse and man, and while he's harnessing I'll put you up something to eat on the way."

"Now this is too bad!" she said to herself, while she watched Felix out of sight. "I feel as if I was playing a double game. Of course it's better that a man should have a clear record, like the Doctor or my husband; still, I do believe Harry Sundon's is an exceptional case. I wish I knew what she would think. Why," fairly gasping for breath as recollections of talks in the winter came crowding on her, "I know now! I ought to have given a hint,



and not let the Doctor go off without a hope; he's had such a hard life, poor man, that he sees everything black. And as for Sundon I believe it's all fancy."

Yet she could not quite convince herself nothing was the matter there, after all.

Felix felt very glad to find his driver more silent and his horse faster than the country average. His blood was up. The thing he had dimly imagined had come full upon him, and for the time he could see no other matter. He had heard occasional rumors in all these years that Grace was likely to be engaged; but they had each one turned out unfounded. It was easy to understand that among the officers of the distant garrison more than one might be pleased by her, possibly enough she might return the feeling of some lucky fellow; still Felix would not be daunted, would not give her up till he should absolutely receive her wedding-cards. He had waited and worked so many years for success, still modest, but at last enough in his eyes to warrant his coming forward, that he could not easily bear a check. The Waveney had said Grace was more charming than ever; he could imagine it; she had never been crude, but she had still ripened slowly; at thirty some women begin to fade, but she would be perfect. And now there must confront him the prospect, the risk, the danger, of Sundon making her his prize,—Sundon, who had had everything he desired, enough to have wearied of



half of it; yes, and much that a man is the worse for experiencing—much that must have unfitted him for Grace's companionship. Would Grace understand that? Would she shrink from Sundon, divining what he was, or would the realization of that be so beyond her that it were not possible to undeceive her? Again, perhaps Ina's kindly judgment might be just, and Sundon's nature might be purified through his care for Thyra and his affection for Grace—if, coming so close together, one of the two things did not inevitably make a wrong of the other. Still Felix must go on and hear what Grace had to say, though it were the death-sentence of his future; must tell her what he believed Sundon to be, though it were treachery to a man whose confidence he had unwillingly surprised in an unguarded hour.



## CHAPTER XVI.

HARRY had decided to reach his goal on Long Island by the morning boat rather than by the train; in the forenoon the first was never crowded, and he should be more likely to avoid meeting acquaintances. He wanted to be as nearly alone on this expedition as he could.

It was very disturbing that he must seek Grace in that haunted neighborhood, which of itself was likely to recall to her the memories that he wanted to blot out. At least he should not find her in the little house; it had long since been given back to the gardener's occupation. But the season was the same, the region round unaltered; would those influences not make her unbelieving as to changes in other things?

He went out on the upper forward deck to smoke; but his cigar was hardly lit before he took it from his mouth to greet an approaching fellow-passenger.

"Why, Doctor Belden! When did you come on? Glad to see you." He had forgotten that he should think Felix's next appearance ill-omened. But Felix could not let the associations of their last meeting pass.



“You have not been so fortunate lately,” he said. “I was sorry to hear of your wife’s death.”

“Yes,” Harry answered, deceived by the sympathetic tone, and feeling as if he were deceiving. “It’s not an old story yet. Poor Thyra! Still—”

He broke off; for once in his life he did not know what to say; he wanted to tell Felix nothing, and at the same time felt as if he ought to make no pretenses with him.

“Are you going to Coney Island?” Felix asked. The boat, after touching once or twice along shore, finished its voyage at that point.

“No; I have business in what Waveney tells me is your old neighborhood.”

Felix questioned no further for the time; they both sat silent, while the little steamboat paddled out into the Bay, and then as if shy of meeting the larger and showier boats that crossed the open water to and fro, kept close to the Long Island shore, following the green, tree-crowned bank (now rough with brushwood and careless roadside grass, now smoothly terraced and leading up to large well-ordered country-houses), that runs from Greenwood to Fort Hamilton. Just as a traveler begins to find this shore monotonous, it turns suddenly, making the eastern wall of the Narrows by a little clean-cut bluff, faced citywards with a hanging grove of wild trees



whose lighter green is brocaded with tops and boughs of dark cedars, while under the front towards the Lower Bay a handful of fishermen's shanties nestle, fringing themselves with tumble-down scraps of docks. Here Fort Lafayette stood ruined in the channel, and garrisoned by a fog-bell; looking back as the boat passed, the brick walls and doorways cased with stone, the large-leaved spreading seedling ailanthuses (warm-weather trees which are so out of fashion now as to suggest neglect) springing up against them, and in front a huddle of queer little sheds and big old boilers on the small wooden pier of the islet, all joined to make a picturesque sketchy effect; with a certain West Indian suggestion, echoed, when you turned your head, by Coney Island's distant shining sands. Across the Narrows, the fine hill of Staten Island rose from village on the wharf to villa on the edge of the high-set woods; its sharp southward corner made sharper by the grassy steep between the forts.

"That's a bad piece of work for its purpose," said Harry, pointing to the lower fort; "a few foreign shells would bring it all down on the heads of the garrison, and kill them with their own casemates."

"To be sure," Felix rejoined. "For all that, in these times of peace, it is the best thing in the Bay architecturally; a real rock could not finish the picture better than the simple lines of those great gray walls."



You and I though have more to do with the other shore now, I think."

"It's flat enough over there beyond Fort Hamilton," Harry answered, with seeming carelessness, but beginning to wonder what the Doctor meant.

"All the same you cannot expect to have a dull errand of it, if you are going to see Grace Delahay," Felix said.

"How came you to know Miss Delahay well enough to call her Grace?" asked Harry.

"We were children together, and friends once, and are so still, I dare say; but I have not seen her for nearly nine years."

"You are bound there this morning too?"

"Yes, I am."

There were no other passengers on the forward deck, and few on the boat at all; but the conversation was dropping into low and excited tones.

"Just tell me," said Harry, thinking it best to risk something, "have people been putting her name and mine together already?"

"No, indeed. But I have a way,—a foolish one, I imagine,—of taking things for granted on my own ideas."

"Well—I may as well tell you that as far as I am concerned you are right. I mean I'm neither so conceited



nor so down-hearted as to be sure what she thinks of me; but I must hear it to-day from herself."

"I wonder if she understands you well enough to know what she ought to think of you."

"Were you going down to enlighten her? I don't want to snub you; you deserve no such treatment; but I must tell you it's quite unnecessary; she knows me already better than you do."

"What do you mean?"

"You don't dare to doubt her, do you?"

"No! but I doubt you."

"Well, since you have heard half, you may as well have the whole. You came to understand me by an accident; so did she. Only her occasion was more serious, if possible; just before matters came to a climax between Thyra Lang, as she then was, and myself. There was still time to turn back, and Grace tried to turn me; in fact I promised to let Thyra alone, and I began to; but another chance meeting, and I broke my word. Grace thought at first the whole thing was a deception and a trick on my part; but I don't believe she does so now."

"If she was willing to renew the acquaintance last winter, I suppose not."

"That was an accident, too. She evidently didn't want to make trouble between the Waveney's and myself."



"I must own I think you have behaved well to the Waveney's."

"I owed it to them to let them think better of me than I deserve."

"But now have I any business with Grace in this affair?"

"That you can tell best for yourself; I mean to see her to-day; but I haven't the right to stop you."

"Then the whole matter rests with her. I shall go on shore and look at the old places; but I don't interrupt you, since you are not the man I remember you."

"I hope this isn't too serious to him," thought Harry; and aloud, "I thank you for that."

They parted at the boat-landing; Felix strayed off to the beach, Harry took the way to Mrs. Bishop's. "Mrs. Bishop wasn't well, saw no one; but Miss Delahay would be down in a minute," the servant said.

The large bare old rooms with their faded carpets, their quaint engravings in black frames, their scanty furnishing and scattered scraps of antiquated bric-à-brac, looked the same as the first time he had seen them. Nothing was changed but himself. He could not go back and be the man of that spring day, younger, freer, unburdened with those recollections that he feared would make an impassable barrier between him and Grace. If he had only known— Well! who dares to break a law



should have courage enough to bear the law-breaker's punishment; and perhaps— "Here she comes; does she look unwilling to listen to me?"

She came, with her heart full of another image. She had no idea Felix had crossed the mountains; Florence's letter had miscarried this time, not reaching Long Island till that evening, after all was settled; but since their parting, there had never been a day that Grace did not think of her love. In her separation from her old friends, she had seen no reason to crush the seemingly hopeless longing with which she also must destroy too much of her inner life. "When he marries it will be time," she had told herself, even as he himself; and the occasion did not come. While she was in Texas, in new circumstances and busy with Heien's education, her love had retreated far enough into the background of her life to be a melancholy pleasure. But the first approach to her old surroundings had brought it forward, and Harry's attentions gave it a new and poignant phase. Other men had been interested in her, but none affected her so strangely or strongly. Escape him she knew she should in the end; yet she feared the meantime.

She met him with a troubled face; still he thought he had never seen her so lovely. For her part, she had expected to find him overbearing, and instead it was in a gentle manner, recalling Tyne to her mind, that he said,



“You see I could not take your letter for an answer.”

“I wish you had. I do not know what more to say.”

“But I know; I who had to follow you.”

“What shall I do?”

“Love me! Since I cannot turn, Grace, turn to me.”

“I have no more choice than you. I cannot love you. I do not.”

“And yet you say you have forgiven me.”

“Yes; I mean to do you justice; but love is a step beyond, and I cannot go so far. I pity you and am angry with myself, that you have set your heart on me; but what you ask is not in me to render.”

“Grace, give me time; let me try to win you; a month, a year, ten, twenty, if you must; only don't send me away altogether.”

“It is useless; the longer you wait the less it will help; you will only wear out yourself and me; once for all, I cannot love you.”

She spoke very gently and sadly. But for all that he lost control of himself.

“The devil! here I have had my own way all my life, and now when I must succeed, when I don't care to live another day without success, I fail! You cruel, cold woman, I hope the same may come to you that you give to me.”



“A lover’s blessing, indeed!” said Grace, her eyes flashing.

He looked at her a moment. “No; I take it back; I must wish you well, no matter what you do to me.”

“It’s no use,” she said at last, after a long pause, a heavy silence to them both; “I am as wretched for another as you can be for me. Why should we torment each other then?”

“Forgive me! I should have guessed that.”

“I took pains you should not, you of all people. I think now that distinction was unfair.”

“Trust me then. You give me no hope; have you none for yourself?”

“None.” She really believed it; it was so long since she had seen Felix.

“Impossible! You might draw any man to you you chose; but if you think he will not come, I am here.”

“I cannot forget him; I do not know how.”

“It’s all my fault; if I had not lost my head, and thrown myself away on a woman not to be named in the same year with you, I might win you yet; always so!”

“You must not make yourself miserable with that; before you ever saw me, I loved him.”

“I might have made you forget him, though, if I had not been such a fool.”

“Never!” thought Grace, but would not speak it.



Still her silence was not an assenting one, and Harry could not but understand it. On this desperate moment followed an impulse that was given no time to grow cool.

"Too late and too soon; that is the history of my life, it seems," he went on. "But if I can do anything, it shall not be of yours. I see it all now; I know the man, and he loves you; why, he all but told me so not an hour past. It's Felix Belden."

She hid her face in her hands.

"Yes. It's the only thing I am sure of in this world, what you and he care for each other. He has come on from California, and for you."

She looked up. "Where is he?"

"Down on the beach. I'll bring him up. He ought to have been here, not I; but I told him what I was about, and that sent him off. You'll hate me again for that, and indeed you may. It seems I never can treat you fairly. To be sure, he's not to be bluffed off by a mere guess, like the idiots in the novels; he would come to-morrow to see for himself what you decided, anyhow; but you shan't have to wait, if I'm an honest man."

"And just when no one could blame you for standing aside, you turn and help me! I have misjudged you cruelly; and now you prove a friend, such a friend—"

"Grace, did not I tell you I loved you? and I mean it. This is the only chance I ever shall have to show



you it; the only thing—and a poor trifle enough—I may ever be able to do for you; and I should be a precious scoundrel if I did less. Say no more; in two minutes you shall hear him.”

He was gone. Grace sank into a chair, one hand at her throat, one on her breast; she was choking with the flood of emotions that had come upon her.

Harry found Felix just leaving the shore to take the cross-road towards the village (in doing which, by the way, one avoided passing Mrs. Bishop's house). He was walking slowly along with his head bent, and noticed nothing till Harry had laid a hand on his arm, saying, “Come quick; it's you that are wanted.”

“What's happened?”

“What I ought to have known would. I'm nothing there. It's your place, it always has been; never any one's but yours. Whenever you and I come across each other you always have the best of it, and now you've fairly beaten me off the field. Your journey from the West was no fool's errand.”

“What do you mean? How do you know?”

“Easy enough. She would have nothing to say to me. At that I acted like a brute, as I generally do just when I shouldn't; lost my temper, told her I wished she might be as wretched as I,—and she owned I had my wish. Of course I had to guess your name;



but she couldn't keep it from me, though she couldn't speak it herself. Now do you see? Come along; I said I would bring you."

"And you can do this for me—for us—now? How shall I thank you? I feel as if I were wronging you. I couldn't have expected so much of any man."

"Good Lord, what do you think of people? What else can I do? A regular scamp I should be if I tried to keep you apart now, when a word was all that it needed to bring you together. I give up nothing, for I have nothing to give up; everything is yours and hers, and I will cheat no man out of his own. I can't help thinking you to blame though for letting her live on this way, eating her own heart all these years; she thought you didn't love her, and she hardly believes it now, poor thing; you will have to do a great deal to make it up to her."

"It seemed more honorable to leave her free than to hamper her with a long engagement."

"Do you know her no better than to suppose an engagement to a man she loved would have been a burden? She is the woman to think half a loaf better than no bread, and I only wonder she hasn't starved outright."

"My sister told me as much, but I was not ready to believe her."



“You’re an obstinate fellow; don’t be so to Grace. But here I stand taking you to task, and am just as bad myself, for keeping her waiting for you. Come! There’s no more to say except to her.”

Grace thought herself quite calm when the first shock had passed; to such temperaments as hers, joy is soothing. But the sound of the two men’s footsteps at the door made her tremble all over; she could but just rise to meet them as they entered.

“You see I can keep my word,” Harry said.

“Don’t—I do believe you—” She put out her hand, thinking she should fall.

“Grace!” Felix caught her in his arms, and her head dropped on his shoulder a moment; the next she lifted it, and turned, with her eyes swimming in tears:

“Oh, Mr. Sundon, if we could—if we could—”

“Never mind me. Think of yourselves now. I’ve just time to catch the next train; good-bye!”

With that he ran out of the house.

“If it could have been any other way!” said Felix.

“What must you think of me, my darling, neglecting you so when he was so kind? I wonder you have not chosen him.”

“I could not. There has never been any one but you for me. But is it true we are together now? I have dreamed we might not always be parted, that



there might come a time when you would love me and I would own I loved you; and now it seems I must still be dreaming."

"You shall know you are awake; I shall spend the rest of my life in proving it to you, my love, my darling! This shall be real, whatever else is shadow; this shall be present, whatever else is past."



## CHAPTER XVII.

HARRY had to run for the train, and just caught it; when he had cooled down from that exercise he took out of his pocket a couple of business letters, and read them over and over, trying to fill his mind entirely with professional matters. "There's life enough in those things," he told himself, "for a man of my age." But this last was not a pleasant reflection. He had no consciousness of failing powers, or sensitiveness dulled to impressions of any sort; must he feel already that in one direction his hold on life had slackened?

Grace and Felix chose an early day for their wedding, that they might cross the mountains before the winter blockaded their road. Ina and Tony were there; but Harry was off on a starring trip, and did not return to New York till "the Beldens" were gone. For months he heard nothing of them; the Waveney's abstained from mentioning them.

At length one day he asked Ina, "How does Mrs. Belden get on in her new home?"



"She is very well and happy she tells me."

"Does she write to you?"

"Often. She is a capital correspondent."

"You must let me know when you have any news of— of them. Of course it will be good; the Doctor is bound to make her happy, and I am sure he will."

After that Ina always reported to Harry what she heard from California; a story of steady success and content. He received it with quiet interest; only once, when she had the birth of Grace's first child to announce, he seemed disturbed. Still, as time went on, Ina believed him reconciled to the state of affairs.

She was mistaken. Do what he might, Harry could not absorb himself in the present so far as to have no recollections. Still reminded every day of what he had been forced to leave behind him as suddenly as a traveler in the tropics, separated from the village of the plain, where he tarried an hour ago, by an earthquake-chasm opening between him and its distant smiling houses whither he had planned to return; finding all things as it were conspire against him to awake associations, a hidden fire lurked under his outward quiet. At first he had been hardly conscious of it himself, under the dulling influence of the great blow he had received. But when the effort to substitute his other interests for the feeling which so quickly and so thoroughly had become his real



life did not succeed in making him forget Grace, his love for her revived. He reproached himself for this treachery in thought to her and Felix; but his emotion held him like a mania. He gradually excused himself for it; what wrong could there be in a mere sentiment? It was only a charm against meaner loves, a last relic of enthusiasm to keep him from growing old too fast. So he was not shocked when by degrees a fixed idea shaped itself: "While Belden lives, nothing; but if he should die? I shall never try to murder him, that would lose me her forever; but if he should die, she might come to me at last." This ghost of a future became his constant companion; he had not the strength to kill it, only to keep it just where it was in its growth—no more, no less, and only known to himself.

Things might have gone worse if he had had no outlet for his emotions. But he could express himself very fully in his acting, yet be shielded by the fictitious situations from having the world understand what he really meant. The danger was that having not enough to interest him outside of it,—for his relations with the Waveneys and other friends, pleasant as they were, yet left many blanks unfilled,—he would wear himself out before his time; for he worked hard and constantly. He foresaw this; but so faintly, that it did not influence him; his calling was too dear to him to be slighted for



the sake of an unpleasant possibility which he did not at all realize.

Years passed; his professional success continued, and his heart-secret was still his own. The last no one had ever suspected less, though it had never weighed on him more, than one winter Sunday evening, when Ina's news was that Grace had been seriously ill, and was hardly out of danger at the time of the letter, which was written by Florence, always an inmate of her brother's house.

Harry sat with the Waveney's for some time, talking of indifferent things and thinking of Grace; at last he went to his own quarters. He and his friends still lived in the same apartments they had in Thyra's time. Since her death, Harry had made no attempt at housekeeping; he hired a woman to come in and do the housework while he was out, and took his meals at a restaurant when the Waveney's did not insist on his making one at their table. He was quite alone when he shut his door. Then was the time for the crowded distinct past and the vague future to come upon him and master him. The rooms were full of suggestions of Thyra; he had changed nothing since her day, nor had he ever been willing to leave the place. He knew people praised what they thought meant devotion to her memory; he chafed at this deception, but how could he explain? It seemed worse to him now than ever, overcome as



he was with anxiety for Grace. In all his fancyings he had never thought of her death; and no wonder, with his temperament. "I have no imagination for the supernatural," he had once said; and to his mind, Grace in her grave would have seemed a thousand times more lost to him than Grace, living, and Felix Belden's wife. So the night was made dreary, and the days which followed were little better, till Ina gave him a more favorable report. Still he was not free from his new care till spring-time began.

Meanwhile he had been acting in a play which owed its great success principally to him. True, the company was a strong one, and the other parts worth representing and well sustained; but Harry's was the sympathetic character of the piece. He played the man who, having known from folly rather than perversity what vice was in his younger days, applied his experience, with wit and keen courage, to the successful circumventing of the really vicious individuals bent on making a prey of the imprudent and unwary people who filled out the list on the programme. The personage is not new, to be sure; but the ingenuity of the playwright had given him some freshness, and Harry's representation made him appear absolutely original. His final fate, Harry declared was "more romantic than natural"; after having worked disinterestedly for his friends, he was unexpect-



edly rewarded by the unhopèd-for though much-desired love of the charming *ingénue*, for whom more than one other had sighed in vain. The critics however approved of this close, saying that "otherwise the play would have been a mere brilliant problem in moral arithmetic."

"Or a tragedy," Harry added confidentially to the Waveney's.

"You are thinking of my uncle Mont," said Tony.

Ina did not mention what came into her own head.

Certain it is that those who still remembered "the gentleman in spite of himself" declared they could almost believe they were meeting him again in some friend's parlor, Harry recalled him so vividly, notwithstanding the difference of looks. Other theater-goers of a sensitive kind objected, "That sort of imitation is too much like caricature for a thorough artist; we don't see it." The first speakers returned, "Why, such perfectly natural playing makes us feel half the time as if we were eaves-dropping and ought to go away if our curiosity would let us," at which the second scolded, "How can you accuse Sundon of such vulgar clap-trap realism as that implies?" Yet though they quarreled as to the grounds of their admiration, both parties were agreed in feeling and proclaiming it heartily.

This part interested Harry so much that he spared himself no pains to make it his best. After a time, how-



ever, he felt it to be a greater effort to play than usual; though the public did not suspect this. For several nights the sensation went on increasing; till one evening, after the play was over, and he and Waveney were walking home in the April moonlight, he said, "Give me your arm, Tony; I haven't been drinking, I swear, but I can't walk straight, for my head swims, and I can't see. I wonder what this means."

"You've got tired for once," said Waveney. "Hadn't we better have a hack?"

"It's not worth while, such a little way. I'm over it now."

The next morning, notwithstanding, he did not come to breakfast with the Waveneys, as he had promised. Waveney went to see if anything was the matter, and found him still in bed.

"It's no use, Tony," he said. "You mustn't expect me. When I try to get up, I can't stand, and my head aches as if it would split. I must lie by for a day, if you can get Benson to let me off."

"I'll make him, somehow; and I'll tell Dr. Barbette to look in."

"You might as well. I dare say it's nothing much, but the sooner it's stopped the better."

"You ought to have something to eat, to begin with; I'll see you do."



"Don't bother yourself about that; I don't want it, I couldn't touch it."

"Oh, wait till you have it."

Waveney's family took his report as very bad news. The eldest little girl, Toinette, began to cry; then she jumped up and ran out. Her father had hardly time to get back to his friend, before there was a knock at Harry's door which announced the doctor.

"Your little girl," said Barbette to Waveney, "caught me on my steps, and would not let me go till she left me here."

"I declare, Tony, I envy you that little puss more than ever," said Harry.

Barbette looked grave at his patient's account of himself.

"No, Mr. Sundon, this isn't a trifle. You have come to a stopping-place for the present; you must rest, whether you like it or not. Overwork, that's the trouble."

"That all?"

"Yes; but isn't that plenty? You keep up a pretty steady strain on body and mind in the regular season, turning night into day every evening, and day into gas-light of Saturdays besides; you've had a succession of exciting new parts year after year; you've starred up and down the country, with all the chances of bad weather, bad food, and the professional worries and



annoyances that unaccustomed places and people might bring on you; you've never spared yourself in the way of business, and when you were younger you—well, you burnt your candle at both ends then, I believe. I assure you, there's nothing the matter that rest won't cure; but you must take it, and a long one too. You've a good constitution, still you're not made of iron; in some points you're not as tough as the rest of us; if you were, you mightn't have made the first-class mark in your particular line that you have; so much the better for you professionally and for us that go to hear you; but all the more reason for not working too hard."

"Well, what ought I to do? Lay up for a fortnight, or a month?"

"Six months at least; after that we'll see."

"Why, doctor, I shall be bored to death."

"Come now, you can't make me believe that you're such an empty-headed idiot as all that."

"And if I don't?"

"You'll take your chance of paralysis, or softening of the brain, or anything else which disables and dulls, but, with a constitution like yours, doesn't kill at once."

"Then I should be a burden on friends, where I have no claim but their kindness. In that case you'd better poison me, quick and quiet."



"Instead of giving you a new lease of life, after a little time of lying fallow?"

"Do you think you can?"

"With your co-operation."

"Oh, then you may as well have it. I'm not tired of the boards yet; there are a dozen parts I should like to try before I go on the retired list."

Barbette looked in again later in the day; after the second visit he met Benson at the street-door of the house, coming to inquire.

"There must be a good deal up if Sundon's sent for you," said the manager, "he's not the man to cry over a scratched finger. Poor fellow! pity he's so knocked up; he does excite himself too much, don't take his parts as coolly as he used to. I'll put on another play, and I suppose a few quiet nights'll bring him round."

"You must give him more than that, if you don't want to break him down."

"Not for the world. But can't you patch him up, just to finish the season? then he'll have all summer to rest. It'll be devilish inconvenient just now."

"I won't answer for the consequences if he goes on the stage again under a year from to-day, Mr. Benson."

"Why, hang it, doctor, what am I to do without him for a year, I should like to know? The other fellows are well enough, but he can do all they can and



more. I can't get such houses with nothing but farces. They like the way the others set them laughing near as well, but they like to be made cry only the way he makes them."

"You must tide over it somehow." Barbette thought Benson's frankness meant a harder disposition than was after all the fact. "Your own life isn't at stake. If you worry our friend to work too soon,—there's plenty of hard work for him in your plays,—you'll kill him, let me tell you." Barbette's face—he was a little, alert, dark man, with eyes as keen and serviceable as fine surgical instruments—showed he did not overstate.

"Mercy on us, doctor! you don't think I'd play Harry Sundon any bad trick, that's always done the handsome thing by me, do you? I'll go right up and tell him he may take his own time to get well in. Going to send him abroad?"

"No; the trip would excite him, and he wants quiet; besides, he'd better be under my eye for some time now."

"If there's anything he ought to have, let me know. But who'll take care of him? he's all alone."

"Not with the Waveney's on the next floor. Trust them to look after him. They had me over as soon as they thought he could want me."

"Well, I may see him?"



“Yes, but don’t stay over five minutes by watch. He isn’t fit for visits.”

“Unless yours, I’m afraid.”

Benson came out more alarmed than he went in. “It’s like the world coming to an end,” he said to himself, “when Sundon’s not able to hold his head up.”

For many days Harry had a low fever and did not leave his bed; even after that was over, it was long before he could get out of the house. He had never been ill before in his life, and these hours of physical weakness and discomfort, rarely amounting to actual suffering, but keeping him unfit for action, were forlorn enough. By degrees, when he was able to go into the Waveney’s quarters, and sit looking out of their windows or watching the life of the household, his lot seemed more tolerable. But it was so absurd, to take care of himself, or be taken care of, as he had done for poor Thyra once! He used to laugh at it; he would have fretted, but for the prospect of returning the sooner to his profession for all this “nonsense.” Little Toinette would watch over him, “to see the children don’t come and tease you,” she would say with an air borrowed from her mother. She was not as pretty as Mary and the new baby-boy; though she had Ina’s fine eyes, she was too much like her father’s family in feature for real beauty; but she had



always been Harry's favorite, since the day, when a tiny thing brought into a room full of strange and to her alarming people, she had checked her coming tears and turned to him for refuge with a smile.

When the summer began, Barbette sent Harry out of town, to Atlantic City. The salt air at first seemed to be the right prescription; but the doctor, who came down from time to time to look after his patient, said one day, "You've been worrying about something or other; you must stop that."

"One can't get quite away from the world anywhere, you know."

"I hope your friend hasn't brought you bad news, against my orders."

"Nothing; nothing, indeed."

Harry was telling the truth, yet with a reserve. He had had this information the day before from Waveney:

"The Beldens are coming on. Grace is well now, but the Doctor thinks she needs rest and change. He's the California member of some scientific association, or medical congress, or what not, that meets at Newport this year, and can't and won't do without him; I'm glad they appreciate him. So this time that brings them both. They leave the children with his sister, who will take the best of care of them; of course that's hard for Grace, but they are too young for so long a trip,



and it would do her no good if she had to be looking after them all the time. The Doctor has a partner, so he can take a vacation."

"When do you expect them?"

"In three or four days at farthest. We shall have a little business together. Mrs. Bishop has died, and I am one of her executors. She leaves half her property to Grace, which is very natural; and the other half to Ina, which I think equally so; but it vexes Ina, who says it shows a want of confidence in me. Still she accepts her share—the old house on Long Island. We mean to spend our summer there, and the Beldens are to make us a visit, whenever the Romaines, who have the first promise, will let them leave Newport."

A little later Waveney came again and Felix with him. "We are in town for a day or two, on account of this legacy-business," Felix said, "and I felt I must see you. My old friend Barbette reports you as mending, but I'm afraid you are not quite done with him yet."

"You certainly look as if California and good luck had agreed with you," Harry said. "And your wife; is she better?"

"Perfectly well now; the journey has done her a world of good."

"Tell me, would I know San Francisco again, or



have they pulled it all down and built it all up on a new plan?" With that they talked, till Belden went away, of the places and people they remembered on the Pacific side.

"There's a happy man, and not arrogantly so either," thought Harry. "But if I could have seen her! And yet I thank her for not coming near me."

"Grace," said Felix, when he had returned to her, "I am afraid Sundon has not forgotten yet."

"I wish he might. It seems as if it was my fault. But here's a letter from Florence, all good news about the children. If only they were here!"

"Don't think too much of that, or you may not get back so soon."

July came. Doctor Barbette declared in the course of the month to his patient,

"You've had enough of the sea for a while; something more bracing is what you need now. You must go to the White Mountains; but not by through train; spend one night in New York, take a Sound boat the next, and so on by easy stages."

Harry began his journey, therefore, by visiting the Wave-neys; his own rooms were shut up. That family were delayed in town on account of repairs required at the old house on Long Island; they had a good deal to say about the Beldens.



“How young Grace looks for a woman so near forty!” Tony said.

“Oh, she’s only thirty-six yet,” Harry answered.

“She hasn’t faded at all,” Ina said. “She looks just as she used to.”

“That’s easy to believe. Toinette, what are you about with that big needle? come and show me.”

Toinette brought her embroidery,—she had just reached the dignity of crewel-work,—and sat down by him.

“So you know my cousin Grace?” she said. “Isn’t it funny she should be my cousin, when she’s older than my mamma, and her little boy and girl, that are younger than I am, should be my cousins too? She has their pictures; she showed them to me, and I think she cried a little bit, not to have themselves here. They’re nice, but they’re not so pretty as my brother and sister. But she’s so pretty, and so nice!”

“And Doctor Belden, what is he like?”

“Cousin Felix? I don’t know so much about him; he isn’t easy to know, as papa says. But we’ll see them again; we’re going to Aunt Bishop’s house—that’s our house now—to-morrow, and most likely the next day they’ll come to us. Poor Aunt Bishop, I’m afraid I don’t care much if she is dead. I should be a great deal more sorry if anything happened to you.”

“You would, pet?”



“Wouldn’t I? and so would everybody else. But you’re getting well, you know. Everybody wants to hear how you are. First they used to ask papa all the time; and now they’re out of town, they write. Oh, and one day there came a funny old man, that keeps a hotel near Aunt Bishop’s, and he nearly cried, asking about you. And Cousin Grace and Cousin Felix were so sorry; and Doctor Barbette came in to tell us about you, and Cousin Felix asked him so many questions about how he took care of you, that I got quite mad with him, because I thought he thought Doctor Barbette was a bad doctor; and I asked him if he meant that; but he said, ‘Oh no, he knows twice as much as I do.’”

“Then I must be well taken care of.”

“Can’t you make Doctor Barbette let you come and see us when Cousin Grace comes? Ask him. She’d like it, and we’d like it, and there’s lots of room in the house: it’s so big!”

“Maybe, puss.”

But Harry was very far from meaning such a thing. He felt as desirous to see Grace as ever; but therefore he would not; above all in his present state, which made him doubt if he could meet her calmly. He tried to reason away the whole thing, looking at himself in the glass, and seeing the image it gave,—gray, pale, worn, dispirited. “I am grown old, and what have old fel-



lows to do with love? She herself is not so young either." But it was no use. "If her hair were white and her forehead wrinkled, she would be Grace still; and they tell me now she has lost nothing of her looks, of herself. I will not see her, to torment her with my troubles; what I began when we met last must be carried out to the end."



## CHAPTER XVIII.

INA and the children went off the next morning, to take up their abode for the rest of the summer in the Bishop house. Waveney staid behind, seeing about various luggage that was to be sent down there; Harry remained with him till the late afternoon, when they parted for their different destinations.

“I’m sorry you’ll miss the Beldens,” was Waveney’s unsuspicious last word.

Though New York was now empty elsewhere, West Street still over-flowed with its usual flood of freights and passengers; heavily-loaded trucks, crammed street-cars, throngs of people on foot; the great stream of travel for business or pleasure, bound north, south, east, and west, inland, coastwise, and over-sea. As Harry, on his way to the Boston boat, made one of this mingled crowd, he noticed a large lady before him drop a traveling-fan; he picked it up and stepped forward with “This is yours, I believe, madam?”

“Yes, thank you,” said she, turning on him a well-set, large, but not expressive pair of black eyes (like



what Ina's, if the life and spirit had left them, would have been), belonging to an appearance still showily effective, notwithstanding a too-comfortable life had injured it in the direction of trimness of figure. Her companion, evidently her husband, seemed to have enjoyed the same existence, though the providing of it had left more marks on his face and much gray in his beard. He too looked round, and an expression of utmost astonishment came over him as he saw Harry. "Why," he blurted out, "I saw your death in yesterday's paper at Long Branch."

It appeared afterwards that one of the lesser journals had filled up a blank in its columns with this statement.

"I'm not a ghost quite yet," answered Harry, quietly, but not without a certain uncomfortable feeling at the address, intensified to something more as he suddenly recognized who it was that had spoken. "But as for you, Mr. Lang, you look good for the next twenty years; the world has gone well with you."

"So well," said Lang, with an impulse of pity for the worn man before him, "that I have no more quarrels with any one."

Harry bowed, and let them pass on. He could not say another word; but he thought, "If I were to die now, I should be free of the world; he is the best off of us now."



“Was that Mr. Sundon?” the present Mrs. Lang afterwards remarked to her husband.

“Yes. Why do you ask me that way, as if I ought to have been harder on him? If you saw a ghost, Kate, would you fire stones at it?”

The boat was crowded, but Harry did not look about for acquaintances; the hot day had fatigued him; he found a cool corner, and sat there scarcely observing what went on round him. The sea-breeze had refused to blow that day; a heavy haze dulled the air, blurring the pretty circuit of the harbor, and thickening into a white fog as they got out into the Sound. The night would not be dark, for the moon was full; but the mist made sky and water alike monotonous to the eyes. It was still early when Harry went to his stateroom. He took off his coat and boots, and lay down; he was not a nervous man, but liked to be ready at a moment's notice, if anything might happen. He dozed and woke and dozed, had strange dreams, vaguely unpleasant, and sleepless intervals in which memories came before him like shadows, not able in his dulled state to move him with their accustomed force.

The fog-whistle began to blow, and in his dreams the sound shaped itself to that of the fairy hunting-horn of the old legend he had once read, which rang through the French forests when kings were to die.



A sudden crash and shaking woke him: he sat up, his nerves quivering, his mind bewildered; his first clear idea was to listen for the noise of running water; he somehow remembered to have heard of a boiler explosion on one of these great boats, where the hot water poured all over one floor, and the passengers, who might have escaped had they remained in their berths, were scalded by jumping into it. No; his ears caught other sounds; shouts, screams, splintering thuds like falling timbers, and a roaring crackle which must mean fire; one could smell the smoke too. At once he was out of his room: the next moment he was carried along in a rush of people who were making for the upper aft-deck and the open air, away from the rifted wall of the boat and the outpouring cloud of fiery smoke beyond the break. Men, women, and children, in wild confusion, were crying, "She's all on fire," "We are sinking," "Where are the life-preservers," "Where are you, father, mother, Mary, Jack, any of us?" The lamps on board were all out; but the sliding door which opened on the deck, driven back hard, showed a great mouth of pale light. As the people reached it, two or three stumbled and fell over the sill. Harry, who had now slipped ahead, stood in the door and called out, "You there behind, wait a bit; if we don't trample each other, we're safe enough."



The breathless crowd paused a moment; the fallen people picked themselves up with his help; then every one advanced, but more slowly. They found the deck on a level with the water; a boat was floating close to the railing, but it was unluckily more than half full of people already; having no oars, they could not push off, Harry saw.

“There’s a boat! Let us aboard!” cried those behind him.

He sprang up on the seat that runs along the railing, and called out, “She’s crowded, but she’ll take another woman or two; let ’em ahead, boys, and you try the floating stuff;” for a glance behind him showed the water full of broken timber, mattresses, camp-stools, and other such things floated up from below.

“Try it yourself!” and a couple of men, big and strong, but demoralized with fear, flew up at him and pushed him over, as they jumped for the boat. He fell backwards into the water; a floating beam, rising on the wave the steamboat made as she suddenly keeled towards him, struck him in the side. The blow turned him faint for a moment; then, the coolness of the water seeming to revive him, he raised himself, with a re-awakening of all his energies to save his life, and looked about as he began to swim. In the faint light he saw the little boat bottom upwards, and the people climbing



up on her and on the supports of the hurricane deck of the steamboat, still above water. Then a boyish voice at his ear, whose sound seemed oddly familiar, said, "Swim away quick! we can't help them now; she'll go down and suck us under."

"Strike out, and we'll keep together!" Harry answered; and following his companion's lead, in a few minutes they were clear of the wreck, and losing sight of it in the fog.

The new fellow-voyager—a slim boy of twelve or thirteen, in his under-clothes, but wearing a watch and chain,—stopping to float a minute, said with a choking voice, "Not a sign of them! Would you go back?"

"No," Harry answered, as cheerily as he could; "they'll be picked up as soon without you; I saw a steamboat lying off us just now, didn't you?"

"She's no good; it was she ran into us, and smashed herself and is going down too. I came from the forward end of ours; there were father and mother and I—the people pushed me one way and them the other—oh Lord!"

"Come, my boy, keep your breath to keep you up. When your father and mother are safe, you mustn't go under to make them not care that they are."

"Yesterday was my birthday, and father lent me his



watch. It was only for the day I asked him, and if I never give it back—”

“Oh, but you will yet.”

“Our end was all afire. I heard a man say, ‘I won’t burn nor drown neither,’ and he shot himself through the head at his stateroom door. Then I jumped off.”

“The more fool he. Now you brace up and work ahead, but not too hard though, my man. These waters are full of craft; ship, schooner, steamboat, anything you like to pick you up.”

“But if I should get too used up even to float before anything comes—”

“Put your hands on my shoulders when you feel tired, and you’ll be safe.”

So they paddled and floated along, far beyond their depth, with nothing but their own strength to depend on. After a while Harry felt the boy’s hands on his shoulders, and heard him whisper, “I can’t help it.”

“You’re not heavy. Now you’ll do better.”

Still no sight or sound of help or life; only the endless pale water and white fog. By-and-by the boy said, “I can’t stand this much longer.”

“Slip down, and I’ll hold you. I can swim with one arm.”

Harry caught the boy by the neck of his shirt as he slid to one side, held him up and swam along; but this



was hard work; and now the thought stole upon him, "If I should fail too?" His wet clothes hampered him, and he could not try to get them off without letting go the boy; he felt a dull ache creeping over him, and a burning in his side where the timber had struck.

Just then there was a low sound behind them like a distant cheer.

"That's help!" cried the boy, with a shrill scream. "Turn about."

As they turned, the noise grew louder. They saw something dark lying low on the water, like a heavily-freighted clumsy sloop, with what seemed a stumpy mast at one end; from this the sound came.

"This way!" the boy cried again; "here's two of us drowning."

"We're too heavy to come fast, but keep up and the tide'll bring us," answered a chorus of voices.

The tide had now begun to set strongly towards the swimmers. Harry, revived and excited by the prospect of safety, struggled against its bubbling ripple; before he hoped, he touched the floating mass, and he and the boy were caught by friendly hands and drawn on board.

For some time he knew no more; then he heard some one speak. "Good God, he can't be dead. No, he's coming to. There, lean against me, that's easier for you than lying flat;" and he felt himself raised a little



way. The voice sounded like the boy's, but was that of an older person.

"Who are you?" Harry asked, vaguely. "I've known you somewhere."

"I'm Charley Corbin of St. Louis,—and bless me, you're Harry Sundon. Here we haven't met in all these years, and now first thing I know you pick up my boy for me!"

"And a hundred thousand thanks, and there was never anybody so good, and oh, I don't know what to say!" It was a woman with a cloud of hair falling about her, and brushing Harry's face as she knelt beside him, that spoke.

"Both father and mother safe; didn't I tell you, my man?" said Harry. At that the boy sobbed and hid his head a moment on his mother's shoulder. Then, trying to compose himself; "Father, here's your watch back; it'll want some cleaning after all this wash; if your friend—" But here he broke down again.

Harry, with his head against Corbin's knee, was able to look about him, and slowly to understand their situation. They were on a raft, floating low in the water, rocked by the strong-running tide. It was crowded with people, some dripping wet, their clothes clinging round them (luckily for these, the night was warm), and others quite dry; some entirely dressed, others in curi-



ous undress and dishevelment; all sitting crouched and nearly motionless. At the stern was what Harry had taken for a mast; it proved to be a man, a tall young fellow in the uniform of a sailor of our navy; he was sculling with a short oar, guiding the heavy raft as steadily as he could. Behind, towing by a rope, was a smaller raft, holding a few more men and women.

"Now holler again, all hands!" the sailor called out; "shout, squeal, cheer, make all the noise you've got in you! One, two, three!"

The men lifted up their heads with their former cry. But Corbin put his hand over Harry's mouth. "'Sh, 'sh! you'll kill yourself if you try to do any more. We can't have you breaking a blood-vessel now."

"Now take breath and let a fellow listen!" was the sailor's next order. They all were silent; but so was everything around.

"Now holler again! We don't want no more collisions to-night." So with shouting and listening, they kept on their way.

"That's a good fellow at the oar," Corbin told Harry. "When we got up on the hurricane deck, he had that baby—the mother's holding it now, but he took it while she was looking for the other children; she found them all, but her husband's nowhere—on one arm, while he worked at the raft with the other. He called us men



to help him, and pretty soon we got it afloat; it was a long jump down, but everybody lit safe. I'd never have left without my boy; but we thought he was right behind us; when we missed him Lizzy fainted, and the fire flew at her and singed her hair, and I caught her up and jumped too. Once we got clear of the wreck, we picked up half-a-dozen people out of the water; then those tagging on behind, so scared they could hardly keep afloat when we found them; then you, that are worth the whole lot."

Still they drifted, and the shouters were growing weary, when a distant whistle was heard before them, to the right hand. The cheer answered it, loud and joyful; as the raft was hushed, the whistle rang out nearer and more sharply; and the pulsing throb of paddle-wheels began to fill the air.

"That's the *Empire*!" exclaimed a young fellow in a red shirt at Corbin's elbow. "I know her singin' mighty well. Best boat on the Sound; we'll find better quarters than the old tub we left behind, tell you what!"

Another shout, and another whistle. "Old Ben Franklin himself would pay all he was worth for that!" said the red shirt.

The sky, which already had been faintly lightening, began to clear; the pink flush before sunrise tinged the breaking fog; the east was darkened only by the welcome



shadowy mass of the great steamboat. The people sprang to their feet, waved hands, handkerchiefs, coats, shawls; to their now incoherent screams and cries an answer rang out firm and distinct: "Stay where you are, and we'll be along right away."

At once the shipwrecked crowd were still. They saw the great wheels turning; the *Empire*, towering over them as a lofty pile of building towers over children in the street, came on, came close; she slackened, slid her shining bow past them, stopped. A man, two, three, leaning over the bulwarks of the lower forward deck, were letting down ropes which the red-shirt was catching. The sailor, leaving his oar to another hand, came among the people to keep order. "The women and children first," he said. "Hi! you up there, let down a chair." It came, and he fastened the women and little ones to it, and sent them up one at a time. As soon as they were all safe, "Now's your turn," said he to Harry; "you saved that little chap, and you're hurt somehow."

"I can wait—" Harry began; but two or three men caught him up, and before he knew it he was on deck too.

A place had been cleared among the wagons and freight; there stood the already-rescued, watching their companions follow. Passengers with help to offer, fears



to set at rest, or curiosity to satisfy, crowded the wide lower doors; and on the upper deck was another throng, with excited and pitying faces, leaning against the rope netting and gazing over. Somewhere, but whether above or below Harry's dimming eyes and confused brain could not tell, he saw Grace and Felix; their looks of sympathy met his uncertain glance. He thought he called her name, though in truth he did not speak. His head swam, his feet gave way under him; but he was upheld by strong arms; he yielded himself to the friendly support, and to unconsciousness.



## CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT happened after that? Harry could not tell, for one. He had strange intervals of consciousness, when a sense of pain, at first dull, grew violent, but was quelled by opiates which led him into heavy sleep; with waking the suffering returned, and was driven away as before. There would be moments in which he would see familiar faces, but whether in fact or in delirium he was never sure; he seemed to change his place continually, though he could not move. Whether this went on for hours, or months, or years, he did not know. At last he waked without pain, and found himself lying quite still, no longer tossing on the Sound, and in a quiet place, no noise of boats or waters or shouting in his ears. He was in a room, the old-fashioned furnishing of which suggested Mrs. Bishop's house. Through a broad window not far from his bed he could see the tree-tops stirring in the sea-breeze, and the afternoon sun streaming on the fields beyond. He could but just lift his head, he was so weak; yet he felt a



comforting sense of safety in his surroundings. Only he seemed to be alone. "I'd like to see somebody," he thought. "I wonder if I can speak." With that he called,—though his voice surprised him, it was so faint,—"Any one here?"

"Yes, I am;" and Corbin came forward. "I hope you're pretty comfortable now. I mayn't be much of a nurse, but I mind what I'm told; they had to let me try to do something for you,—you that saved my boy. Mrs. Belden's better than I, but there was too much for one to do; you've needed care every minute."

"You've been very good to me; I've seen you off and on; so you're real, all of you? Isn't this the Waveney's house?"

"It is. Doctor Belden said you must be out of town, and we got a tug, and brought you straight here. We telegraphed for your own doctor, and he came post-haste; so you're in good hands."

"I must have got rather battered to need them all. How long have I been here?"

"Two days."

"How are your family?"

"All right, only a trifle shaken; they're at Start's. Old Start has been up time and again to hear how you were getting on."

"He's a good soul. I wonder, by the way, who those



fellows were that pushed me off. I know I've seen one of them somewhere before."

"That one's here, and in a state of mind, the scamp! He wants you to forgive him; but I wouldn't do it. He came down to Start's last night, and made his confession this morning; Start drew a pistol on him and ordered him out of the house."

"That was foolish of Start; what's done is done. Tell the fellow that; or, if he takes it hard, bring him in, and I'll tell him myself; yes, do that, the sooner the better."

"All right; I'll leave you with the Doctor, then."

Corbin went out, and Belden took his place. For some time nothing was said; then Harry began, "So I've been ill, and it's not over yet?"

"Not quite."

"You and Barbette keep giving me opiates; don't get me into the habit of them; that's worse than whisky."

"Never fear."

"What made you pick me up on the boat, I wonder?"

"Why not?" taking Harry's hand.

"You don't know how bad I am. I have been wishing for years that you might die; and you come to help me!"

"My dear fellow, when you do me any harm it will



be time to stand off." The speaker's friendly face did not change; and Harry, expecting the hand he held to be withdrawn, felt his own pressed tighter.

Here Corbin re-entered, with a shabby, forlorn companion, of blotchy skin and bloodshot eyes, showing in his air only the faintest traces of former jauntiness.

"You don't remember me, Harry," faltered this individual.

"Goring?" asked Sundon.

"Yes. I haven't got on, you see. I haven't any luck; that's pulled me down." He looked as if drink had used him worse still than fortune. "And so I got tired of the West, and when I could, I came back. You're cursing your own luck for that, I know. But I lost my head. My head isn't what it used to be. After all, our end of the wreck didn't burn, and grounded and didn't sink any farther; so there we sat safe till a tug picked us up. You'll never forgive me."

"Bosh! Why, I have forgiven you. What's the use minding, now it's over? Only keep cooler the next time, that's all."

Goring shivered as if Harry's words were an electric shock.

"Good Lord! You let me off too easy, I that have murdered you!"



Harry started up and then fell back, Felix supporting him. "I must be going to die, then!" he said.

"Now you've done it twice over!" Corbin growled. "Get along with you! Go to the devil!"

"I thought Barbette had told," Goring answered; "he told me: and that's enough to send me to the devil already; I'm there now."

"Barbette and I thought there was a last chance, if we held our tongues," Felix said.

"And I've finished that too!" said Goring.

"Come," said Harry, recovering himself, "I'm not worth making such a time about; if it hadn't been this way, it would have been some other. I do forgive you, Goring; remember that, and never mind the rest."

"You shan't say I've killed you to save my own life, anyway; I won't outlast you long, I give you my word."

With that Goring hurried from the room. He kept his promise within three months; not by suicide, he had not nerve enough left for that; but through drink and self-neglect. At the last he was not friendless; for Barbette, encountering him by chance, took pity on him for the sake of Harry's pardon.

Harry lay quiet a good while after Goring was gone; at last he spoke to Felix. "Sooner, or later? Tell me true now."



"I am afraid sooner."

"Hard, or easy?"

"I hope easy."

"Don't do anything to lengthen it out, if it's a struggle."

"I promise you."

"Yes; what's the use of keeping me alive a trifle longer, just to suffer a few more minutes? But I know you won't. Now there are a few people I should like to see while my head's clear."

"You've only to name them."

"Toinette Waveney first."

"Poor little soul!" said Corbin; "she's been sitting crying on the stairs all day long."

He brought her in, dishevelled and red-eyed. "I look too horrid for you to see, now you're sick," she said, "but I couldn't help it."

"Never mind," said Harry; "I like my friends any way they come. Don't you know that? You didn't think I would get back so soon, did you?"

"You must never go away any more."

"Oh yes, pussy, I must, and soon; but not without saying good-bye to my pet first."

"I wish I could kill the captain of the steamboat and the man that threw you in the water. I hate them!"



"It wouldn't be any use. You can do a better thing for me than that, darling; just put down your dear little head and kiss me, so. There, all your people have been good to me, and you not the least of them. Now ask your papa to come here to me."

The child went out, choking down her sobs.

"Poor kitten!" said Harry. "I wish she might be through her troubles for the rest of her life with this. Now I must talk business with her father, good fellow. I've never laid up a cent, and with this wretched long vacation of mine I may be in debt; but if selling my old things won't cover it, why, Belden, I depend on you to see he don't make himself liable in any way."

He made his arrangements with Waveney very clearly; then they had a few words of friendly talk, though the younger man found it hard to be composed.

"I should like to bid your wife good-bye," Harry said; "she has been the best of sisters to me, and I thank her a thousand times; but I'm getting so tired and stupid, and there's one other friend—one other."

"I know," said Waveney. He and Corbin left the room together, and did not return. Grace entered in the next instant. Harry's eyes looked "Stay!" to Felix; but the Doctor walked to the window.

"Tony was right, Grace," Harry began, "you are



one of the young people, you don't fade. I'm glad to see that. As for me, my time's over."

"Not yet, my friend," she forced herself to say.

"Ah, but I know it; don't try to make me cheat myself. Of course it's not easy for a man who has been used to carry his point and have his own way to find that there's something in the world stronger than he, which won't yield an inch for all he may struggle against it. But I have learned at last how to face what I must. You taught me that, if I had been willing to understand sooner."

"I would rather, so much rather, the lesson had not come from me."

"No one else could have given it; and I see it all now, though through my own obstinacy, it's too late to be any good beyond helping me to die quietly. But no matter. I've only been disinterested as an artist; I've lived for myself too much as a man; and if I went on, I might do no better."

"You have been so kind to so many people—the Corbins, Tony, myself—"

"Where it came easy, or I had no choice. Poor Thyra could have told another story once; you must know from your husband for how long and when, besides what came before."

"He never told me."



"That's more than I expected. You two have kept my secrets as I did not deserve. I thank you both. True, at the last I did what I could for her—no, I haven't the right to say that even. She is gone, and I follow. My life has run in a circle since first I saw you; and the round finishes here, where it began. Do you remember, Grace,—I can ask you to remember that,—the day we met on the steps, and you showed me this house?"

"Yes, I shall not forget."

"If I had been wiser then—but no, you had already made your choice; and if you had not, I was not good enough for you; I should have made you very unhappy, if we had married when Mont thought of it. You were right in despising me then."

"I have always been too hard on you; I have done you wrong."

"No, never! only justice to yourself. You deserved something better than I could give, and you have it. I can see you are a happy woman."

"Yes, thanks to you."

"Oh no. Belden would have taken care of that without me. But now everything is done, and I may go. I'm afraid I shall put Benson to some trouble at first; but Tony will fill up the blank before so very long. Otherwise I shan't be missed."



“But you will!”

“Don’t take it so hard; if I thought any one—if I thought you couldn’t do without me, how could I die with good courage? But all my friends have some one nearer them than I; so I can make up my mind to the end. I get that poor consolation out of a selfish life.”

“You blame yourself too much; what have you not done for your friends, for me? You brought me all my happiness.”

“And you make me able to die in peace. Good-bye now; I feel drowsy and heavy, and when I wake I suppose the fight begins. If I should be conscious at the last, come again; but I don’t think I shall. I have seen you once more, and you end the world for me. Don’t stay; you could not help me, and you must not take my trouble on yourself. Good-bye.”

She could not speak; she bent down and kissed his forehead, as she would her own child’s, had it been there suffering; then she left the room, turning at the door to bid a last farewell with her eyes.


“Give me your hand again,” Harry said to Felix; and he fell asleep holding it as the twilight began.

Barbette slid into the room with a shaded lamp. The two doctors watched anxiously; they knew there might be terrible hours coming; but their fears were not



fulfilled. For some time all was still. Then Felix suddenly felt the grasp on his hand tighten. Harry was awake, and made an effort to raise himself; but in a moment he sank back, the blood pouring from his mouth, dead.

THE END.

















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